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THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

VOL. II

Königsmarck

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THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

SOPHIE DOROTHEA, *CONSORT OF* GEORGE I., and her Correspondence with PHILIP CHRISTOPHER COUNT KÖNIGSMARCK (*Now first published from the originals*)

BY

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WITH 42 PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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CHAPTER XVIII

KÖNIGSMARCK RETURNS FROM THE WAR

Come back! from love of thee my soul is glowing,
Come back! without thee my sad heart is grieving,
Come back! for by thy absence, my beloved one,
Bewildered, bitter tears in floods are flowing.

HAFÌZ.

THE Princess and her mother went to the Frankfort fair; but their visit was a brief one, and the Prince of Hesse was prevented from meeting them, so Königsmarck's jealous fears were groundless. From Frankfort the Duchess of Celle took her daughter back with her to Epsdorff, where the Duke was a-hunting. We find Königsmarck writing, "At present my greatest happiness is to know that you are at Epsdorff, and you are going to stay."[1] But the Princess remained there only a few days, as her presence was imperatively required at Hanover, where the Elector and Electress of Brandenburg had at last arrived on their long-expected visit, and were being entertained with every mark of honour. The Duke of Hanover was anxious to be invested with the Electoral dignity

[1] Königsmarck to the Princess, Ghent, September $\frac{11.}{21.}$

forthwith, and urged the Elector of Brandenburg to put pressure upon the Emperor.

The defeat at Steinkirk had sown discontent among the Allies, and many of them, including the Duke of Hanover, if he did not receive his dues, were ready to lend ear again to Louis. Colt writes : " Balati [the French envoy] is at last returned, bringing many fine things with him, especially for the ladies, and he says so many fine things of the French Court in public, besides what he doth in private, that I have met with much coldness from the Minister, Count Platen, and his lady, who govern all things here ; and if I could speak with the tongue of an angell, and this Duke's interest were never so much on my side, it would avail but little, unless I did make some presents as they had from France."[1] The Duke, a born diplomat, temporised with France, and got what he wanted from the Elector of Brandenburg, who brought his visit to a close, well pleased, and departed with many expressions of good will. Two days later the Duke of Hanover went to carry the good tidings to the Duke of Celle at Göhre.

With all this important public business on hand it would not have been surprising if private and Court intrigues had been for the time overlooked; but it was not so. While the princes were busy with affairs of State, the princesses were no less concerned with family matters. In some way the intimacy between Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck had again attracted attention. Perhaps some of the letters miscarried (it is noteworthy that none of the Princess's letters from

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, September 27, 1692.

Frankfort are preserved), or the servants babbled to Countess Platen and aroused her jealousy afresh, or the Duchess of Celle, who narrowly watched her daughter while she was with her, discovered something and communicated her fears to the Duke. However that may have been, suspicion was aroused, and it was determined to prevent Königsmarck and the Princess from coming together again. Suspicion fell on Countess Aurora as an accomplice in the intrigue, and Duke Ernest Augustus sent her a message to the effect that she would do well to avoid Hanover in the future. Königsmarck also seems to have received a hint that other princes might find his services more useful.

All this threw both the Princess and her lover into great alarm and agitation, though their fears, in either case, were not on account of personal danger (which was considerable), but lest they should be parted from one another. Much of this is told in the five letters that follow.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Hanover], $\frac{\textit{September}\ 28.}{\textit{October}\ 8.}$

"It is not enough for me to be bowed down to the earth by the fear of losing you, but you must add to the *peine* by being dissatisfied with me. All the rest is nothing in comparison with this last affliction; it makes me oblivious to everything else. I can find no comfort anywhere. You reproach me with having met La Marionette [the Princess of Hesse] as arranged at Frankfort. I could not help going there; my

mother insisted on it. Besides, I knew that the Prince was not coming with his sister ; I thought him much farther away than he actually was. In any case, everything passed off so well that you are the most unjust of men if you are not satisfied. I did not see a single person there worth mentioning, as I have already told you. The person you sent to spy has doubtless informed you to the same effect, and I am hoping that the first letter I receive from you will give me as much joy as the last four have given me sorrow. They are all in the same strain, and I am desperate because you are so unjust. My life ought to show that my love for you is unequalled. I have ceased to take interest in anything, and for this long while have sacrificed everything for you—to better prove I am worthy of your love.

"If I must give up seeing you, I will give up the world altogether. I cannot contemplate such a thing. Yet I fear I must be prepared for it, for the Electress of Brandenburg has told me that you will be sent away, but on some pretext which will not apparently concern me ; she had it from Countess Platen. I cannot describe to you the state I have been in for the last four or five days ; if grief could kill, I should surely be dead. I no longer sleep, I do not eat at all, and I am a prey to gloomy foreboding. It may be that time and absence will cure you of your passion, but mine will end only with my life. That is a truth time will show. I have your portrait. I cannot look on it without tears ; I wish it might testify to the intensity of my sorrow and love. I fear many afflic-

tions and misfortunes are in store. Le Barbouilleur is in league with Countess Platen and her cabal. He tries to harm Aurora in everything he possibly can, and went so far as to say to the Duchess Sophia that she was a 'she-devil.' I should hardly have believed he could have been so base a coward as that. I told you that he once began to show airs to me, but he did not go far; the anger I evinced soon stopped him.

"You say you are 'going to Brussels to cure yourself.' How can you have the cruelty to write such a thing to me—who am so sensitive and tender? Anger alone spoke when you wrote those words. You don't mean to go. I know not yet by what mischance one of your letters was opened: La Confidente is trying to find out; fortunately you say little in it. But you tell me that they will force you to leave me. Let me know what makes you think so; reassure me in my trouble and anxiety. My love is proof against all; I vow you an everlasting constancy.

"The Duke [of Hanover] went away this morning on a visit to my father.[1] He took only Le Barbouilleur with him. I believe the Duchess will follow, and I shall go with her, unless the Prince should arrive soon. . . . I have been interrupted at this point in an alarming manner. I thought I was perfectly safe, for I gave

[1] At the Duke of Celle's hunting-seats of Epsdorff and Göhre. In his *Despatch*, September 30, 1692, Colt mentions that the "Elector of Brandenburg has gone home and that the Duke of Hanover is with his brother, hunting."

orders to say that I was asleep. I had your portrait quite near me, attached to a screen, and. . . .[1]

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[HANOVER], *October* 10/20.

"I have heard nothing from you for a week. I am in despair, for I have never been in such need of consolation as now. I still hope to receive a letter from you this evening, but if that hope should fail I know not what will become of me. I have endless things to tell you. I would give my blood to be able to tell them to you by word of mouth, but I see little or no chance of it. If you could come secretly I think the plan might succeed. I shall go to meet the Prince,[2] but I shall be there only a few days; we shall return here together. The matter they are trying to arrange, and on which depends my visit to the Electress of Brandenburg, is almost settled. There seems to be no doubt that the investiture will take place in four or five weeks. Knowing your temper, I am not sure if you will approve of my visit. I can assure you I think only of how to escape from going; but it is very difficult, for I have not to deal with children, and in the present state of things it would be harder to make excuses than at any other time. Let me know your wishes, and think, too, of some sensible expedient, in case you should not wish me to go. The Prince has written a ridiculous letter, with an

[1] The end of this letter is not to be found.

[2] The Prince of Hanover had returned from the campaign to Luisburg.

order to give it, from him, to Le Barbouilleur, with his compliments. I did nothing of the kind. La Confidente returned it to him without a word from me. He avoids me as much as I shun him. No one could spend a more miserable life than I do. I am in a perpetual state of terror, and, to crown all, your letters are so cold that they make me lose patience. I declare, every one conspires against me. Instead of loving me more firmly than ever, you overwhelm me with unreasonable complaints. Maybe you rejoice at the obstacles in the way of my happiness. While I am fretting my heart out here, and have not a moment's peace for fear they may part us for ever, you may be secretly tasting the joys of new conquests, without giving me so much as a thought. I am surprised that I still keep my reason, or know what I am saying. Persecuted as I am on all sides, tormented by anxiety on your account, I should not wonder if my brain were to give way. I have never deserved your love more than now. However bitterly you may reproach me, however much I may fear, nothing shakes my resolve to love you for ever, and to prove it to you all I can. They can hinder me from seeing you, but they can never keep me from being yours all my life long : you take the place of all to me. They told the Duke [of Hanover] that you moved to another house with your sister Aurora, and so sought to lure me to your place. Think of that ! How they seek to ruin you ! I did not sleep all night thinking of our being parted for ever. I know now the agony of separation so well

that I dread it more than death. Yet I believe with a little prudence and good behaviour one could remedy all these evils, but I would rather *speak* to you about the measures to be taken than write. When shall I have that bliss? It seems very far away. I am so uncertain about your feelings towards me that I hardly know what to think. It is my great anxiety, for were I sure of your love my sufferings would be much less. I am trembling as I write—I fear every sound; but I worship you, and as long as you love me I can console myself easily about all the rest."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"DENISE, *September* $\frac{20.}{30.}$

"We have sent our baggage on to Ghent, and as I am in need of paper, I beg your pardon for using loose pieces which I pick up from anywhere. I cannot hide from you any longer my fear that they will separate us soon. To tell you all. My sisters wished to go through Hanover on their way to ——. Marshal Podevils, knowing they had arrived at Hamburg, asked leave to go and see them. The Duke told him he knew my sisters were there, and he had been informed that Aurora wished to visit Hanover. He therefore begged the Marshal to tell her with his compliments that he had the highest regard for her, but she would do him a great favour in changing her plans, as she and all her house had witnessed their last carnival at Hanover.[1] My sister,

[1] The Duke evidently thought the Countess Aurora was coming to Hanover for the carnival in the winter.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA. [*To face p.* 350.

From a Drawing formerly at Strawberry Hill.

astonished at such a message, which perhaps was never before sent to a lady of quality, begged Marshal Podevils in reply to tell His Highness that she had not expected such civility from a prince, or one who passed as such, and it was easy to obey his commands, as she had no intention of spending another winter in Hanover, for the last visit gave her no longing to return. Her answer was smart enough, but I wish she had written it to Monseigneur le Duc, for Podevils will not tell it to him like that. You can see how far the power of that woman[1] goes; we all have to fear her. She was waiting for the Marshal after his interview with His Highness at Luisburg, and said to him: 'I know you are going to see Königsmarck's sisters at Hamburg, and they tell me Countess Aurora is coming to Hanover. I can allow her to return to Court if His Highness is willing to permit it, though we have no great confidence in her.' These are the exact words she used, and I do not know whether they mean that the Duke or the Countess has no confidence in her. I don't think Aurora cares much about the confidence of either; her greatest trouble is that she cannot pay her respects to Madame la Princesse. You will understand how these things worry and distress me. I have thought of writing to Marshal Podevils and begging him to tell me if this affair was doing me harm with the Duke, as I should have to take precautions, and adding that I expect him to do me this kindness as a good friend of our house; but as his answer would probably be to

[1] Countess Platen.

advise me to leave [the Duke's service], I have not carried out my intention without knowing your wishes, which are my law. If, however, you give me leave, you will see a fine row, for I will avenge myself on this insult in such a manner that the whole world will talk about it, though that pleasure would cost me dear, for I should have to leave you."

"AFFLEGEN, *October* $\frac{6.}{16.}$

"I was hindered the day before yesterday from finishing my letter by the alarm that the French were going to attack Charleroy,[1] but it came to nothing, and therefore I am able to write now. As my previous letters seem to have upset you so much, I am dying to know what there was in them to offend you so greatly. You command me to make the *amende honorable*; I willingly do so. I am only too happy to find myself mistaken, and hope you will forgive me. The Prince of Würtemburg's affair must have prevented the Prince of Hesse from carrying out his intention of going to the fair. I have not heard who went to Frankfort, but I think that *ma chérie* has been badly rewarded for her trouble in going to the fair, for I hear very few men of quality were there. You are good enough to say if I find anything in your letters to vex me I must put it down to anger: of course, one must pardon anything from an angry lady, so tell me, I pray you, what shall I do to make it up with you?

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Göhre, October 17: "We have just heard the welcome news that the French have failed in their design on Charleroy; they were for the most part sure here that Charleroy must be taken."

THE CASTLE OF AHLDEN. [*To face p.* 352.

(*From the river.*)

Command me and I will obey. My crime is suspicion. Surely it is only right and fair that I should tell you my fears, even though I may be in the wrong. I own I am wrong, and am ready to offer you any reparation. I have never sighed 'for fresh conquests' since I paid my court to you. To be sure of your heart is my only happiness and desire; but, Beloved, I cannot suffer any rivals. . . . All the treasures, all the pleasures, all the charms of the world will not lure me from the woman who has my heart. You may be sure that neither kings nor riches, neither castles nor all the tortures of hell, would make me change."

"*Six o'clock, from* CHARLEROY, *October* $\frac{10.}{20.}$

"I sighed a long time for your letters. Two came yesterday. I opened them with joy, but gladness was soon changed to direst grief. My misery is so great that it will surely drive me to some desperate deed. I was so troubled and distraught that I did not notice yesterday that the King was looking for me in the crowd, and bowed to me. Monsieur Bülow warned me, otherwise I should not have seen him. The order that our troops are to go to the relief of Charleroy could not have come more *à propos*, for I shall seek death there, and so find relief from my troubles. Think only of yourself, and take every care that their suspicions may not get you into trouble. I implore you do this. I will bear all the disgrace with joy if only I see you out of danger. I will gladly, be of all men the most miserable, I will give up the only woman I have ever loved in my life, I will leave

the Hanoverian service, and so be deprived at one blow of my divinity, my calling, and my consolation. The North takes away from me the means of livelihood,[1] and even in play bad luck persecutes me. See to what plight I have come! I have borne ruin and disgrace with impunity, happy in the joy of being able to love you with a lasting love, but now I must live without you! I cannot do so. If I have to leave you I must leave life too. Charleroy will help me; there I will seek death to end my sorrow. . . . If death does not decide my fate, I will never abandon you—not even though I were poisoned, massacred, beaten black and blue, or burned alive. But I talk like a man who has lost his reason. I do not see how in suffering all these insults I am gaining you. I am only drawing on you no end of trouble. I must give you up; but, if I must die, I will die avenging myself on those who are forcing me to abandon you.

"My greatest grudge is against La Platen, and on her I will avenge myself, for to her I attribute all my misfortunes. I will seek out her son, pick a quarrel with him, and send him to the other world. After that I will tell everybody how she persecuted me, tell them also all the foolish things I did with her, and then, if the Duke still shuts his eyes, the first time I meet her off her dung-hill I will insult her so publicly that all her life long she will never dare to show her face again. But how small is such revenge in comparison with the harm she does

[1] The King of Sweden was threatening to confiscate his estates.

me! for she robs me of the only joy I have in the world. I lived only for *ma chérie*, I wore her chains with gladness; she was my joy, my divinity, my all. Imagine, therefore, the misery this jade of a Platen brings upon me! If I were lord of creation I would offer a sacrifice of her, and give her to the bears to eat; the lions should suck her devil's blood, the tigers tear her cowardly heart out. I would spend day and night seeking new torments to punish her for her black infamy in separating a man, who loves to distraction, from the object of his love. . . . I thought it very likely they would try to remove me because they egged on my sister Aurora to send so rude an answer to the Duke. But as to what you tell me from the Electress of Brandenburg, don't you think she said it to see whether you would betray yourself; for I cannot believe that La Platen would have said that to her! Should the Duke come to hear of it she would be ruined.

"Your last letter of the 28th comforts me a little, for you say that you will always be faithful to me, and all these persecutions only serve to encourage you in that determination. You give me back life. Should their plan of sending me away from you come to anything, we shall see what will happen. I do not see any way for you to make me happy unless you, some time or another, confide in your mother that your love and my removal would make you do something foolish. That fear will either make them keep me near at hand or send me to the other world. They are desperate remedies; but if one cannot

hope, one fears nothing. I know not if my dear one takes my meaning.

"*L'envoi*.—The mischance with the portrait makes me tremble. If I see you again I will take care to be hidden. Is it possible that you think your assurances of love weary me? Your letters are the only joy I have. Continue to send them, I pray you, and be wise. I read the last word with as much joy as the beginning—if only you do not speak of my removal or of your going away for some time. The sweetest part of your letter is where you ask me to tell you what to do so as to obey. I entreat you, do not suffer them to part us; use every effort to prevent it, and if in the end it must be, *come with me*, following the fate of Léonnisse and her chevalier; it is the only real way for us to be happy."

The Princess's letters are now missing, and we are left to gather the substance of them from Königsmarck's epistles. Apparently the Princess did not approve of the desperate remedies suggested in his last letter. As Königsmarck often complains, she was of a timid disposition and not given to heroic measures. She was unwilling to take her mother into her confidence; she was not prepared to leave all and flee with her lover, except as a last resort, nor did she approve of his writing to the Field-marshal. She took counsel, it seems, with the Electress of Brandenburg, who, she must surely have realised, had she reflected, was one of her worst enemies. The Electress does not appear in an amiable light in this affair. Like her mother and

all her house, she hated and despised Sophie Dorothea, but, unlike her mother, her conduct was by no means free from reproach. Her intrigues were many and notorious, and she seems to have suspended her animosity towards her sister-in-law for a time in the pleasure it gave her to find that she had an *affaire* too, though there was no point of resemblance between her numerous light-of-love intrigues and Sophie Dorothea's one great and sincere love-passion. The Electress advised her according to her lights. Sophie Dorothea was to temporise ; to make her peace with Countess Platen, whose jealousy was at the bottom of the whole business ; to advise Königsmarck to do the same, and all would be well. The advice was unworthy, but the unhappy Princess resolved to follow it. It seemed to her the only thing to be done, and anything was preferable to separation from her lover. In her new-found confidence with the Electress of Brandenburg she paid her a brief visit at one of her country palaces.

Meanwhile Königsmarck was trying in vain to obtain his leave and return to Hanover and his divinity ; but on some pretext or another it was always refused. The campaign was now at an end. King William had gone back to England, the Prince of Hanover had left the camp, and all the electors and princes had departed their several ways. The Hanoverian troops were sent to the garrison at Dist, into winter quarters, and Königsmarck with them. Impatient at the delay in getting his leave, he threatened to return to Hanover without it, though this would be

tantamount to resignation, and so play into the hands of his enemies. He writes:

"JENAPPE, *October* 25.

"You know well that rather than do anything which might displease you I would be torn into a thousand pieces. I will therefore *not* write to the Field-marshal, but obey your commands in this as in other things; it will always be a joy for me to do so.

"I cannot understand what it means about my sister Aurora wishing to estrange the ducal family. I am curious to know what she has done. Since you wrote so freely to Aurora, I hope you will tell her to burn your letters. The phrase 'kind person' in the mouth of La Platen has a hidden meaning; it is evident she suspects something without quite knowing what, for I am certain if she really knew the least thing she would not fail to inform those who ought not to know it. I do not at all agree with the Electress of Brandenburg's advice. My soul would be very base to pretend submission to a person who is persecuting you. Were it not for your sake I would make her pay for all the harm she does to honest people. I cannot understand the Electress speaking so freely to you about me and La Platen. There is something hidden which I hope to discover."

"LOUVAIN, *October* $\frac{17}{27}$.

"I have arrived here at last, but have not yet got my leave. I don't know what it means, for all the other officers who have asked have received it. I am determined, in case I do not get it, to demand

my discharge. I may as well do so, since they seek a pretext of getting rid of me, and I can find again in the King of England's service all I shall lose from giving up this. But what breaks my heart is that all the kings in the world will not console me for the loss of a goddess like you. Alas! what shall I do? If I enter that service I shall see you rarely, and how shall I exist? No, that cannot be! I would rather attach myself to the King of Sweden, for at any rate I should be nearer at hand, and could find means of seeing you oftener."

"*October* 27.

"At last I have received three of your letters at once, and am greatly comforted, even though I see that all plot against me. I am more than satisfied with you, and I cannot understand how you got it into your head that you were forgotten—you who are charming above all women. What is more fervent than your ardour, more sure than your promises, more touching than your sighs, more tender than your love, more pleasant than your company, sweeter than your intercourse, and, in fine, more charming than your beauty? With so many perfections and attractions, how can you have the least doubt that I could ever leave you? Do not think it so light a matter, for my heart is full of your charms, and I respect you as much as I adore you. I give myself wholly to you—my body, my soul, my possessions, my honour: I sacrifice all for the love of you. But even thus I am not sure of you. You cause me many sorrows; but when I

remember all our exquisite transports, all our sweet violence, I forget my grief. What ardour, what fire, what love have we not tasted together! Shall we ever enjoy those precious moments again?

"To answer you about the journey you are making.[1] I think you show too much eagerness to go, but since you wish it so ardently of course I approve. You had the same wish to go to Frankfort! If I were to tell you my true thoughts, I do not care too much for my lovely one to seek places of amusement at such an unhappy time; but what must be must be—and, indeed, how can we prevent it? To comfort myself I whispered to my heart it was the very place for me to see you without being known; but it answered, 'You will have only a moment, and the rest of her day must needs be given to others.'

"I don't mind the Electress of Brandenburg's talk, and the way you say you conducted yourself at her Court charmed me, though I cannot quite believe it. But you do not tell me the names of the people where you have been, and it is very vexing that you have not had my letters. The Prince will not join the others, but go to the Elector of Brandenburg's. You are wise perhaps to put yourself right in that quarter, but to what end will it lead you? You have not enough strength of mind to alter your conduct. What do you mean to do? When we are the best friends in the world, the least rumour frightens you and makes you wish I were ten thousand

[1] The visit to Berlin; this was deferred for a time (Colt's *Despatch*).

leagues away; but then, when you reflect, you are sorry for your fears. This continual vacillation does not help us. Look at the Electress of Brandenburg. She lets the world talk till it is tired—till it no longer talks about her. Yet she has the same to fear as you. As long as they know nothing *positively*, all will work for the best if you are courageous; but the least thing frightens you. How then can I give you any advice? You do me an injustice when you say that I am 'engaging in new conquests.' I swear to you on my oath that so far from having any such intention, I have never been to visit any woman except the wife of my lieutenant-colonel, whom I cannot avoid calling on sometimes. I did, however, accept the supper invitation of the Elector and the Count of Nassau, and many light ladies were present, of whom I have told you.

"The tale about my house can only have originated with Countess Platen, and she may one day have to pay very dearly for her lies. I could revenge myself on her very well through Aurora's lover, but I fear that might do harm, and I should not like to go to that extremity before I am forced to do so."

"Two Hours from Dist, *October* 31.

"Here I am arrived at my garrison—the most barren spot in the world! I am lodged with the nuns; they are not like those of Venice, for they see only their nearest relations. I have not got my leave yet, but that does not worry me much; I shall

be consoled if I get it soon. I should have gone about it without fail to-day, only I have hurt my foot and may have to rest here a few days. Still, it makes me rage, for I hoped to have gone before the Prince's departure ; now I cannot. See what bad luck I have! Were it not for a stout heart I should break down. Pardon me, I pray, for having advised you to forget me. I am too much your friend not to know I ought to do so; but it is no use. I *cannot* give you up. I do nothing but weep. My beard is like a hermit's ; my nails are as long as if I were going to dig up my grandfather. . . . When my servant was combing my hair he found several, at least ten or twelve, grey hairs, which show how I take things to heart. Farewell."

"DIST, $\frac{\textit{October 27}}{\textit{November 6}}$.

"I am in the most cursed hole in the world. I can get nothing I want, neither your letters nor leave from my regiment. I have to-day sent my equipage to Hanover, and am waiting for orders to start ; the moment I get them I will post at once to the place where my love calls me. I am desperate at waiting so long for my leave, and will give up the service rather than remain here. If I am driven to that, what would you have me do? Don't think you will dissuade me, for my mind is made up, and if I leave the service I shall at least be able to see you secretly. I remember asking you whether you wish me to wear a wig or not ; as you haven't answered, I fear you have not got my letter. I am not expecting

any more letters from you here, but I beg you to arrange so that I may find some at Hanover, at our good friend's. Will *ma petite louche* write a word or two about her journey, so that our friend may take precautions. I cannot live without you. . . . I have composed a song in German about my lovely one; I sang it at a party. I told the guests that the beautiful one was called Léonnisse, and they swore that they would drink their toasts to that name. That made me happier, and I drank with them. To make the wine pleasanter, I found an old red ribbon, rather faded, which I dipped into it. You know from whom the ribbon comes. This is the only hour I have had a little happiness for three weeks. I must have some if I am to live. When we meet you will win me back to my merry mood. No fear will make me falter, no obstacles hinder me; dangers will not weaken me—on the contrary, they will increase my passion, and hindrances will make the sweetness all the greater. That is how one should love. Love me likewise, and I shall be as happy as a king."

All this time the Court of Hanover was in great excitement about the electorate. The desire of years was now at the point of realisation, and Duke Ernest Augustus was daily expecting a notification from the Emperor that he had been invested with the electoral bonnet. The powerful support of the Elector of Brandenburg was now on his side. On the other hand, his arch-enemy, Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel,

was plotting with might and main against him, and pages of Colt's entry book at this time are filled with tales of intrigue. The electorate was trembling in the balance. News from Vienna was alternately good and bad. The visit to Berlin was settled, then it was deferred, then it was decided upon again.[1] During this anxious period the Duke of Hanover and his eldest son went to Celle to take counsel with Duke George William, who was warmly supporting his brother.

Meanwhile Sophie Dorothea, who cared nothing for electorates, but whose whole soul was absorbed in her secret passion, was keeping up a constant correspondence with Königsmarck, and longing with eager impatience for his return. The Electress's visit, the return of the Prince, and other matters had rendered it impossible for her to see Königsmarck, even if he should come back ; but the visit of her husband and father-in-law to Celle at last gave her the opportunity for which she yearned. She wrote to Königsmarck entreating him to come to her at once, with leave or without it. On receipt of her letter he set out immediately, riding night and day. The following letters were written by him on the eve of, and during, the journey :

"Dist, $\frac{\textit{October}\ 31.}{\textit{November}\ 10.}$

"Since you bid me lose no time in coming to you, I have determined to start at once, without waiting for leave, whatever may happen. It is not very prudent,

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, November 1, 1692.

for it will give them the pretext they seek ; but since you wish to see me, I fly, I rush to the spot where you are. Why cannot I be there to-night ? You relieve me of my forebodings by saying that with prudence and wisdom we shall be able to outwit our enemies. Let me know your plans, and I will give you my views. My life and happiness depend on them. I am sorry your letters were delayed, for I suck from them much sweetness. *Anima mia*, what can I do to prove my gratitude ? How happy I am, mine angel, my divinity, my delight, my sole consolation ! Your merits are beyond all else in the world, your charms above all the sex, your beauty equal to that of the goddesses. I cannot live without you any longer. I am dying to be near you ; but there are yet many days. Adieu, my soul, my life. Adieu."

Pour la personne connue.

"SUNDAY, *November* $\frac{6.}{16.}$

"This is to give you warning that I shall arrive to-morrow evening. You understand me, do you not ? Should this fall into your hands before ten o'clock to-morrow morning, Monday, let me have a line or two from you. On receiving your letter I will act accordingly ; but should you receive mine *after* ten o'clock, I will await the usual signal. Farewell."

"[*En route, later.*]

"I hoped to have found post-horses here, but there are none. Therefore, instead of Monday, I shall not be with you until Tuesday, the 8th. Do not let the seal alarm you : I opened the letter. Though the hasty

journey will have tired me to death, I cannot let the night pass without throwing myself at your feet. Do not refuse me my prayer, or I shall die. You will see me in a mean guise, but I hope you will not mind. I can come in secretly, without any one seeing me, and be hidden as long as you like. I only wait for a word in answer from La Confidente. I will come according to your usual signal. The answer can be sent to my secretary. He will know where I am; it will be given me without fail. Farewell. I am pining for the hour."

Thus, after a week's journey, hindered by many obstacles and delayed by the many subterfuges, Königsmarck entered Hanover by stealth in disguise, and the same night, all travel-stained and weary as he was, he found his way to the Princess's chamber. The lovers met again after a separation of six months. They were fully aware of the risk they ran. What tears and sighs and shadow of parting must have been mingled with the joys of that brief hour's reunion!

The next day Königsmarck doffed his disguise and reported himself to the Field-marshal. As he had left his regiment without leave he fully expected to be sent away to his estates at Hamburg—a proceeding which would be tantamount to his dismissal from the Hanoverian service. He had furnished the pretext his enemies were seeking: he had had his hour and was prepared to pay the price.

But the Duke was away at Celle, and Marshal Podevils was Königsmarck's very good friend, and was

not disposed to press too hardly on his breach of discipline. Instead of sending him to Hamburg he ordered him to remain at Hanover. The lovers' joy was unbounded, and for a few days they seem to have enjoyed one of their brief spells of happiness, unalloyed by jealousy and fear. The story of this is told in Königsmarck's letters.

"[HANOVER], *Wednesday, November* 9.

"I was never more surprised or rejoiced in my life than at dinner, when Marshal Podevils ordered me not to go to Hamburg. I am still ignorant of his reasons, but I shall know to-morrow. I asked him to remember his orders in case they wished to refuse my request, that he might take my part. He reassured me on that account. I am the happiest man in the world. Fortune, who has turned her back on me so often, shows her face again, and I draw a good omen. Heaven be praised if our sorrows should end in this way and we should be able in future to live as we wish! You may be sure I slept well last night, for, as you saw, want of sleep was depressing me unduly. But I think you made allowance for a man overwhelmed by love, grief, and a thousand other emotions.

"Last night makes me the happiest and most satisfied man in the world. Your embraces showed me your tenderness, and I could not doubt your love. They still talk much about the journey to Berlin, and flatter themselves that the business at Vienna will end as they wish.[1] *Je reste inviolablement à vous.*"

[1] The visit to the Elector of Brandenburg at Berlin and the Electoral investiture at Vienna by the Emperor.

If Königsmarck were to remain unmolested at Hanover, it was necessary that he should win again the good will of the Countess Platen and lull to rest her jealous suspicions. She was all powerful, and, acting on the advice of the Electress of Brandenburg, Sophie Dorothea sought to conciliate her, and again advised Königsmarck to do the same. He at first refused with real or simulated indignation, but eventually yielded, and made his peace with her. The lovers then enjoyed a period of comparative immunity. Every person about the Court was, in fact, too much occupied with business of high political importance to heed them and their affairs. Would the Duke of Hanover go to Berlin, or would he not? Would the Emperor invest him with the electorate, or would he not? These were the all-absorbing questions at Hanover. One was soon answered in the affirmative. On December 2 the Duke of Hanover set out for Berlin, accompanied by the Prince. Princess Sophie Dorothea was to have gone too, but at the eleventh hour, as she wished to remain with Königsmarck, she feigned illness. Her *ruse* was completely successful. The Court physician was called in, and the Princess was declared unfit to travel, kept at Hanover, and made to undergo a course of treatment. Königsmarck writes :

"[HANOVER, *November.*]

"On rising from my mattress, which I found the softest in the world, they gave me your letter, wherein I found, what I knew before, the most constant love in the world. Your many virtues set you above the

goddesses, and your constancy raises you above your sex. I note that your answer to the one [Electress of Brandenburg] who proposed you should make it up with La Platen, was to the effect that if the Duke ordered it you would obey, though you did not see to what end. You ask me my feeling about the matter. I would never advise you to do such a thing, for it is beneath noble souls. But what grieves me is that while you think it a mean action on your part, you advise me to do it. I believe you wish to try me, and so I forgive you ; otherwise I should be very angry with you for wishing me to do a despicable thing. Don't imagine I will consent. I will not budge an inch from my determination for all the countesses in the world ; but I am willing to aid your plan, since you hope for a happy ending. I am willing to be civil to her, even friendly, as in former times, if she be civil to me ; but never could I make her believe I liked her, hating her as I do. Fie ! it is beneath me. My transports of delight when I held you in my arms prevented me from realising the full force of your proposition ; I find it so much beneath me that I refuse altogether, and beg you will say no more about it. How can I thank you, angel mine, for all your sweet favours? You have made me the happiest man in the world."

"*November.*

"You could not have given me pleasanter news. Though the journey will not take place,[1] I still owe

[1] The journey to Berlin was postponed (*vide* Colt's *Despatch*, November 18).

you the same debt, but with this difference—if they shatter themselves with their politics, we shall not risk the same chance of being discovered. That may easily come to pass; indeed I hope to God they will break each other up. But, Madame, my joy is not without alloy, for Prince Ernest told me that the Prince assured him, if the journey to Berlin fell through, he would go to Aller. However, I would rather see you there than run the risk of being sent away from you, which would surely happen if we were discovered. My ill-luck follows me, and I see no hope of being luckier in the future. I could most certainly have come to you last night, but La Dondon[1] whispered to the Duchess's *valet-de-chambre*, and I thought they were whispering about us, so I made up my mind to deprive myself of the happiness of being with you. I am very grateful to you for promising to appear this evening. Do come, that I may see the divine eyes that give me light. If you suffered at the comedy, I suffered more. I was dying to look at you, for I found you more beautiful than ever; but I dared not give my eyes that delight for fear of spoiling everything.

"The journey to Hamburg depends on your commands, and I will take them from your lips this evening. At the same time I will tell you all about my interview with La Platen—to rejoice you. I will only tell you now that tears were mingled with our conversation, but I found a way of changing them to loving looks. It was a gross insult to my

[1] *La Dondon*, the plump woman, a lady-in-waiting.

love for you, for which I mean to see you at my feet begging my pardon. You cannot love me as much as I love you, for at your bidding I have sinned against my love for you."

"$\frac{\textit{November } 29}{\textit{December } 9}$, 1692.

"I have heard nothing of your illness except that the Duchess told me you were very unwell, and the Prince said so too; in fact, every one thinks you are quite unequal to the journey. Mind you do not undeceive them! Everything goes well up to now; my throat is rather swollen, but that will not hinder me from seeing you, if you wish it, to-morrow evening. I am sorry you are so *triste*: why cannot I be with you to make you forget your pains? But, beloved, remember you are making the effort for a man who will be ever grateful to you, and who is convinced that he is loved by the sweetest woman in the world. To-night, between six and seven o'clock, I shall write to you again. Farewell."

"*About* $\frac{\textit{November } 30}{\textit{December } 10}$, 1692.

"Poor child! what are you not suffering? To be rubbed[1] without being ill is too much! I am really unworthy of the pain you are undergoing, and am quite crushed by all you tell me of your sufferings. Can I do nothing to deserve all you do for me? I call to witness all my tenderness, my love, my overwhelming passion, my devotion, hoping thus to

[1] "Pauvre enfant! Que ne souffrez-vous point! Suer, se faire frotter, sans avoir de mal c'en est trop." Apparently a seventeenth-century form of massage.

be worthy. I would sacrifice myself a thousand, thousand times, only too happy to seal with my blood the love I bear you, counting it an honour to lose my life for so sweet a woman. If my stupid verses can divert you and make you laugh, here they are. I will compose some every day :

Du sagst Du liebst mich,
Und ich anbet' Dich,
Da sind wir Beide vergnügt, etc.

"I have heard nothing new. The news from Vienna is good; they expect the courier every moment. The Prince is going; and every one pities you, poor dear! they are quite sure you are unable to go. Up till now everything goes on well. Tell me if you think it possible for us to meet to-morrow. They certainly spy upon us, but if we fear no surprises, *pour l'amour de Dieu* let me see you! I cannot live so many days without a glimpse of you. I would rather die than lose my love."

"*December* $\frac{1}{11}$, 1692.

"I could learn nothing about your journey. La Rose[1] said he thought it would be very inadvisable for you to travel, for your illness might come from your being *enceinte*, and travelling would be hurtful to you—even dangerous. La Court said she did not believe the Prince would go; but one cannot be sure about that—the only sure thing is that you must stop where you are. I will tell you more to-morrow. Arrange for some one to wait for me in the gallery at half-past eleven. I will write to you all I know, and you

[1] La Rose was the Court physician.

THE ELECTOR ERNEST AUGUSTUS OF HANOVER.

[*To face p.* 372.

may be sure that after the sweet privileges you have given me I could never change. On the contrary, I love you a thousand times more every day. Your charms fire me so much that I can hardly live. I have the sweetest dreams about you. Farewell until to-morrow."

The Duke of Hanover's journey was wholly successful, and if gratified ambition can make a man happy he returned to Hanover a happy man. The labours and the intrigues of years were at last crowned with success, the dearest object of his life was granted —he came back Elector. The news was eagerly expected. Colt writes: "A courier is come hither with the welcome news that the electoral bonnet was given on the 9th, and just now we have had advice that the new Elector will be here this day." [1]

The new Elector arrived as advised, and the whole city turned out to meet him. His entry was a triumphal procession. There were great Court ceremonials: all the foreign envoys went in state to pay their respects to the Elector; there was a general thanksgiving in the churches and much firing of cannon.

In the Court functions Sophie Dorothea—henceforth to rank as the Electoral Princess—was called upon to play her part. As she was naturally fond of gaiety, there is no doubt she rapidly recovered from her "illness," and entered with zest into the spirit of the festival. Equally certain is it that Königsmarck's jealousy was again aroused. He made little or no excuse for the exigencies of her position, and indeed would

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, December 20, 1692.

seem to have resented her access of rank as a personal affront; he was certainly jealous of her husband, if we may judge from the following remonstrance, which is perhaps better given in the French:

"*December*, 1692.

"Princesse Electorale! L'on peut à présent vous nommer comme cela, car apparemment le prince Electoral vous aura investie de ce titre d'honneur cette nuit passée. Les embrassades sont-elles plus charmantes quand on est dans ce rang! . . . Je ne peux dormir de rage, qu'un prince électoral me prive du plaisir de voir ma charmante maîtresse. Je vous aurai félicité aujourd'hui de votre nouvelle dignité, mais je doute que votre époux ait fait son devoir, aujourd'hui, car si l'on doit juger de son empressement pour vous revoir, l'investiture ne sera faite qu'à six heures du matin. Je souhaite que celle-ci vous soit rendue immédiatement après vous aurez en fraîche mémoire les plaisirs électorals. . . . Hélas! je n'oserais vous faire souvenir de ceux que nous avons eus ensemble; ils vous paraîtront si minces (je me sers du mot *mince*, parce qu'une chanson dit: 'Hélas, mon prince, que vos amours sont minces') que vous n'en aurez plus l'idée."

This letter brings the correspondence to a close for a time. Soon after, the Court festivities consequent on the Electorate came to a close, and Königsmarck left on a visit to his estates near Hamburg.

The year 1692 ended brilliantly for the House of Hanover.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRYST AT BROCKHAUSEN

O friend of all true lovers—tender Night!
  O solace of the dark! O comforter!
Cover us in from the too garish light
  With curtains that no curious breathings stir.
Hem us about, and set thy stars to stand,
  That none may come us nigh to hear or see
How mouth seeks trembling mouth and hand holds hand,
  Or what low whisperings of wonder be.
Cover us in, and keep us well from harm;
  Let us lie surely in thy shelter fair
(Even as my love lies safe within my arm,
  Content to find her present Heaven there):
And we will tell thee all our secrets sweet
Ere Day binds sunny sandals on thy feet.

W. A. MACKENZIE, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[1]

THE future was casting dark shadows along the path of the Princess and her lover throughout the year 1693. Their meetings were brief and stolen; their partings anxious and prolonged—a foretaste of that long parting when they would meet no more. The letters which passed between the lovers during the first five months of this year apparently did not find their way into the hands of Aurora, and are therefore not preserved in this collection. It is, moreover, difficult to follow the movements of the Courts

[1] By permission.

of Hanover and Celle during this period, for Colt, our invaluable guide, went to Dresden in January to invest the Elector of Saxony with the Order of the Garter, and remained many months. The English envoy had also to meet the Saxon demands in return for the aid the Elector was to give William and the Allies in the forthcoming campaign. This occupied him until May, when he returned to Celle, and soon after, the campaign began simultaneously in Flanders and in the Palatinate. The Electoral Prince of Hanover went with the Hanoverian troops to Flanders, and the Elector of Saxony led his troops to the Palatinate.

Königsmarck went neither to Flanders nor the Rhine, but remained at Hanover, despite the fact that his position had become more and more precarious. Whispers of his intrigue with the Princess ran around the Court; he was out of favour with those in authority, the Elector treated him with marked coldness. Yet he could not tear himself away from the Princess, and would not quit the Hanoverian service, as it gave him the pretext for keeping near her. For Königsmarck to remain in the Hanoverian army meant ruin; he had no hope of promotion, and if the intrigue were discovered it would probably mean his imprisonment or death, certainly his banishment. His financial affairs were neglected, and this, added to his gambling and extravagant living, made him very short of ready money; while, to make matters worse, the King of Sweden, who (with Denmark) was now quarrelling with the Brunswick princes to a point which looked

like open war, threatened to confiscate his lands unless he quitted the service of an unfriendly prince. The outlook could hardly have been gloomier, and Königsmarck gained little to compensate him for the risks he was running. Since the beginning of the year there had been an obvious, though unexpressed, determination on the part of those in authority to keep him and the Princess apart. In January he went to Hamburg. On his return to Hanover the Princess was sent to Celle, and she did not return until the preparations for the campaign were well advanced. It was expected that Königsmarck would serve in the campaign in Flanders as he had served the year before; but he excused himself on divers grounds—the hope of being near the Princess through the summer, while the Electoral Prince was away, was too tempting for him to resist. There may have been another reason, too, for last year he had contracted heavy gambling debts in Flanders which were not yet paid.

Under ordinary circumstances it would have been difficult for Königsmarck to have had himself excused, but it so happened that there was a possibility of his services being required nearer home. The kings of Sweden and Denmark, always uncertain, had practically withdrawn from the Alliance, and were now threatening hostilities more particularly against Hanover and Celle. Their demands not being satisfied, the Danes gathered their troops around Ratzeburg, in Saxe-Lauenburg, a fortified town north-east of Hamburg, not far from the Holstein frontier. Only three years before, when

the Duke of Celle inherited Saxe-Lauenburg, as he feared his warlike neighbours, he had repaired the fortifications of Ratzeburg at great expense. The Danes and the Swedes, seeking a pretext for war, now found a menace in these fortifications, and demanded their demolition. This demand the Emperor was disposed to grant; but the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover strongly resisted it, and it looked as though they would have to send troops to the aid of the fortress, and in that event (which at first seemed very unlikely) Königsmarck volunteered his services.

Whatever the lovers' hopes were of remaining near one another throughout the summer, they were doomed to speedy disappointment. No sooner had the Electoral Prince set out for Flanders early in June than the Electoral Princess, much against her will, was hurried away from Hanover to Luisburg, and she remained there, under the eyes of the Elector and Electress, until she went to Brockhausen on a visit to her parents, who were almost as vigilant. But, despite all obstacles, the lovers found a way to meet, and one night, at Brockhausen, a country house of the Duke of Celle's, the Chevalier came to his Léonnisse. The outlines of the tryst are given; it needs but little imagination to fill in the picture. The warm June night . . . the air heavy with the scent of the limes . . . the cavalier hidden amid the trees . . . the signal, the soft low whistle . . . the Princess stealing through the dusk to meet her lover. . . . It is the tale of Tristan and Isolde over again.

The correspondence in this chapter opens on the

day when the Princess was sent to Luisburg, and the letters are those which passed between the lovers through June while she was at Luisburg and Brockhausen. They are largely taken up with the possible gallantry of Prince Max, a lover's quarrel because Königsmarck went to a supper party at the Countess Platen's, a reconciliation and subsequent meeting.

Save for the stolen visit to Brockhausen, Königsmarck was all the time at Hanover, holding himself in readiness to march against the Danes if need be. Perhaps the most noteworthy point in the letters is the conduct of the wily Electress[1] in praising Königsmarck to her daughter-in-law. Her only possible object could have been to sound poor Sophie Dorothea, who readily fell into the trap, and no doubt betrayed herself much more than she admits.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG], *Thursday*, *June* 8, 1693.

"I arrived here in great distress; I cannot tell you the anguish I suffered after we parted. The thought that I may not see you for three months robs me of happiness. I am continually reproaching myself for not having said more to you—for having lost those precious moments. But I thought the other coach was following me, and my grief was so great that I never dreamt of asking about it, and I was walking slowly, waiting for my ring.

[1] The Duchess Sophia, henceforth known as the Electress, and Duke Ernest Augustus as the Elector.

"To crown my misery, I found they had put Max next to me, in the room belonging to my husband. I wanted so much to go to bed when I got here. I was quite broken down, and had such a headache I could scarcely hold up. Imagine my astonishment when I found everything in uproar and disorder, for my servants had not had the wit to prepare anything, although they knew my wishes, as well as I know yours. It was most careless and impertinent of them. I do not ever remember having been so angry. Every one was at supper when I arrived. I sent word to the major-domo to change my rooms quickly, as I absolutely refused to have those arranged. He raised very absurd difficulties, and excused himself by saying he had only obeyed the Elector's orders. At last I ordered Koptein to come. You would have laughed much had you seen me, for I was very angry, and rated him soundly. He went and spoke to the Elector, and came back presently to tell me that if the suite of apartments were three times as large it would be for me alone, and gave orders that Max should be lodged in the other house. I hear Max was mighty civil, and would not let his people do anything without knowing whether I approved. If the Elector had not sent me a proper answer, I should have gone away to-day—reason would have said to Brockhausen, but my heart would have whispered to you, and I know not whether my heart would have prevailed over my reason. I should have spent the night, on my own authority, in the apartments opposite, which they say are reserved for my father, but it is

rumoured are kept for La Platen. However, I am as I would be, away from all company; and the Electress's [plan] has fallen through also, so I have nothing more to fear. I saw no one yesterday except those I have mentioned, and I have seen no one to-day. I shall not go out. I prefer to be alone and give myself up to my tears, which are even more abundant to-day than yesterday. As long as I was able to see you I did not realise what our separation meant, but now I have no hope—no comfort in the world. *Grand Dieu!* why am I fated to be separated from such a lover as you? How sensible I am of your love and tenderness!—they are graven on my heart and memory for ever. . . . I longed to write to you last night, but I could not, as I had neither paper nor ink. I was very much vexed, for it would have relieved me to have sat down and poured out to you the immensity of my pain and my passion. *Adieu, mon enfant adorable.* I must end, not through my heart's fault—it is so full that I should never end—but because my eyes hurt me so much."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, *June* 8.

"My grief is greater now than when we parted. Your tender caresses kept me from realising all our separation meant at the moment; but now, alas! I am the most miserable man alive. I love, I am loved; my mistress is loving, constant, and true: yet I cannot hope for happy days. Oh! cruel Love, for whom

dost thou keep thy sweetness?—for the inconstant and those who love not truly? It seems so, for were love's sweetness for the constant, we should surely taste more of it. If my sorrow is so overwhelming now, when I am only five leagues from you, what will it be when the fatal day dawns for my departure? Every thousand paces will plant a dagger in my heart, and before I join the army my sobs will have stifled me. But I will gladly suffer torments, and chance all the odds of changeable Fate, if I can only see you again as before, lovable, passionate, constant, charming, gracious, and true. Give me but the hope of our meeting, and I can endure all the cruel woes a cruel absence can cause. I curse the day it entered my mind to ask permission to go to the war. *Dieu!* can I truly love you when I take so false a step? Hate me, see me no more in your life, forbid the very mention of my name, keep my letters no more, treat me like a dog, like the meanest of men,—I deserve it all! But what advice am I giving you? *Grand Dieu!* I shudder when I reflect. Were you to take me at my word, what would become of me? Be generous, forgive my fault, have pity on me, for I am losing my head and know not what I say.

"I send herein the numbers,[1] which are rather meagre; but never mind—the rest will follow. I cannot conceal from you a misfortune which befell me last night. La Platen, to damn me, sent to beg me to come to supper in the castle behind the mill. I pretended to be ill, but as she insisted and sent a second time, I

[1] This refers to the second cypher—in numbers.

"THE CASTLE BEHIND THE MILL."

[*To face p.* 382.

went, for fear she might guess the cause of my sadness. What bondage!"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG], *Friday, June* $\frac{9}{19}$, *One o'clock after midnight.*

"I did not expect to get any news from you so soon, so picture my joy when I received a thick packet. Alas! my joy did not last long, for if the beginning of your letter is delightful, the end of it is much the reverse. I should have written to you even if I had not received it, for my only pleasure is to make you remember me, and I could not go to bed without assuring you of my love and faithfulness. I am heartbroken at not being able to see you, and until we meet again I shall find no relief from my sorrows. But I don't know why I tell you all this: you do not feel the same towards me, as your conduct shows only too well. I am not at all pleased with you for going to La Platen's supper party; it pierces me to the heart. You have certainly a command over your feelings which I cannot hope to imitate. It would not have been possible for *me* to have shown my face at a party the very day we bade farewell, but I am sure you concealed your emotions so well that no one suspected you of sorrow. I do not wish to reproach you, but if it be true that you love me, you should be sorry for showing it so little. Surely I deserve better of you, for the way I live and the sorrow I suffer might let you deprive yourself of a little amusement. I can hida my grief so little that Sitardie to-day asked me the cause of my sadness, and

then he went on to say he was going to compose a lament on your absence! I came late from my room, and went only a moment to see the company playing cards. The Elector wants me to take a hand at Neike (?), so that he may play with me; Ilten to be a third. I shall keep out of his way, for I have not the same command over my feelings as you. I drove out with the Electress. We were quite alone, and she spoke of you and said you were *très gentil.* Balati[1] offered me his hand when I came down to supper. I should have refused him had I dared, for it suffices that he is no friend of yours for me to hate him. After supper I kept close to the Electress; she went to the table, and the game ended a moment after. I retired as soon as I could, and walked with La Confidente under the trees near the palace. See the difference between my conduct and yours, and think how much my love is above yours. I shun everybody, I am careful over the smallest trifle; yet, no sooner am I gone than you forget your vows and console yourself with a woman who hates me. No! Nothing can excuse your conduct, nothing can be more unkind. You had no end of pretexts for declining that supper party, yet you went. I tremble for the future. What will it be, *Grand Dieu!* in a few months, if you can do such a thing on the very day I leave? You are so easily comforted. I cannot write more—for my tears."

"*L'envoi, the next morning.*

"I have not slept a wink; my eyes are as big as

[1] The French envoy.

fists, and I dare not show myself in public. La *pauvre* Confidente is pale because I fret so ; she sleeps in the small room next me, and I woke her up at five o'clock in the morning. I am still in bed in agonies of despair at your conduct ; it shows so little love for me. I cannot be comforted, for it was the last thing I expected—a thunderbolt would not have astounded me more. Was not your absence enough to bear ? Why do you crush me with such cruelty ? I should like La Rose's opinion to come true, but I don't expect it. Adieu, Monsieur. I wish you many pleasures ; no doubt you will find fresh ones every day, and forget all about me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, *June* $\frac{10.}{20.}$

"Once on a time I was wont to complain that I did not dream of you ; but now, thank Heaven, not a night goes by but I dream of you only. A poet has composed these lines on my dream delights :

L'autre jour j'aperçus en songe
Celle qui cause mes soupirs,
Qui consentait à mes désirs ;
Mais tout cela n'est qu'un mensonge.
Ah ! ce mensonge m'a flatté
Autant qu'a fait la verité.

La beauté qui le jour se couvre,
Pendant la nuit ne cache rien :
Les yeux fermés je vis un bien
Qui disparaît quand on les ouvre.
Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours !

Rien ne fut plus doux que Silvie,
Et, sans que je fisse d'efforts,
J'eus dans l'image de l'amour,
Le plus doux plaisir de la vie.
Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours !

I wish you the same delight, the sweetest the absent can know. If my song win your approval, and I find any one who can fit music to the words, I will send it to you. I sing it with the greatest pleasure.

"What do I not owe to you ? You behaved so well about Prince Max. You see, you have more power than you think. As long as your father lives they will always treat you with consideration : the Elector has need of him, and will not readily fall out with him. You wish to know, *ma chérie*, how I pass my time. Alas ! how can I spend it away from you but in dreaming day and night of your lovely eyes ? I pine, I sigh, I curse the day of my birth. Sleeping, I dream of thee ; waking, I sing :

Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours !

"La Platen sends me pressing invitations every day, but I only went once—I told you, the day before yesterday, at nine o'clock. I found them all at table. Without joining the party, I walked up and down by myself, singing, and as soon as they rose I returned to town without saying a word. If this does not please you, order me as you will ; I am ready to obey

all your commands. If you think we can meet while you are at the Elector's, let me know, for I am dying with impatience to see you; but, for the sake of our love, do not risk anything,—we should pay for the joy too dearly, our bliss would be turned to bane. How grateful I am to you for telling me your love in terms so tender! Believe me, mine equals yours. I cannot find words strong enough to express it. My eyes bear witness of my heart's passion; they have spoken for my loving heart in torrents of tears. When a man loves as I love, he does not change; and you are one of those rare women whom a man respects, honours, and adores all the more when he knows them well. My love is rather worship. If any comparison can be made between mortals and the gods, you could well be taken as an example. What beauty, what goodness, what sweetness, what charity, what brightness, what charm, what loveliness, what clemency! You are mercy incarnate. You are like the divine beings of whom the Bible speaks. Do not be astonished at my quoting you sweet things from the Bible, for I am in a most devout mood.

"Tell me when you are going to Brockhausen and what answer your mother has sent you: I must know. I should like to know also how the Elector behaves to you and what the Electress has said. I rejoice that Prince Max's charming manners do not charm you. But beware of him, I pray you; you know what he attempted before, and you know what a fool he is. One should not have any intimacy with fools,—they talk too much."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG], *Sunday, June* $\frac{10.}{20.}$

"I am starting in two hours' time with the Electress for Brockhausen; we shall be back to-morrow evening. She is taking no one but Bruno and a lady's maid, and I am taking only Marie. I received your letter, and it gave me great pleasure. I should have nothing to complain about if you had not accepted La Platen's supper party on the very day I left: it is like a dagger's stab to me; but I have written you a long letter already on the subject, so I will say no more. If you can justify yourself and give some good reason for having gone, you will relieve me greatly. . . . I have had a letter from my husband; he permits me to go to Brockhausen, but does not wish me to be there long. I told him that the Electress had given you a knot of ribbon for your standard, and other ladies had done the same. Here are his very words in answer: 'You must have a great lack of news to write to me about *la galanterie de madame ma mère*; I doubt not that you followed her example.' There is something in his answer that grates on me.

"Your song is very pretty. Send me the music. Alas! I have not had a pleasant dream yet: how can I when I sleep so little? Sitardie told me again yesterday that he is composing some verses on your absence in which he depicts me as wasting with sorrow. I don't quite like the joke, yet I dare not take it seriously. I did not leave my room until very late. The Elector has been asking

me why I will not play. I excused myself on the ground that Ilten could not be seated so long; he was so much interested with Sitardie that he was always wanting to run about after him. I fear he did not believe me; but I look on it as a positive torture to be so long with people. I went for a drive with the Electress. She did not go to the supper-table, so I supped alone in my room and went for a walk after with La Confidente; then I went to bed. I have no joy but in solitude. It would be a great joy to me to see you once more; not a moment goes by that I do not wish it. La Confidente is in the small room next me, and you could stay without being seen; there would be nothing to fear. You could even stop a whole day without any one guessing it; but as it is almost impossible for you not to be met coming or going by some one who would recognise you, I will say nothing about it, for though I long passionately to see you, I would rather deprive myself of the joy than expose you to danger. . . . My mother has not yet answered my letter. When I know her plans I will let you know; but in any case I shall come back here with the Electress for a few days. I was nearly forgetting to thank you for the sweet things you say, and when I am quite pleased with you I will send some to you; but I shall not look for them in the Bible (as you do), but in my heart. You ask how the Elector behaves to me. He is the same as usual, I believe; but to tell you the truth I haven't troubled to find out. The Electress is very friendly."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *June* $\frac{11.}{21.}$

"Your letter of the 9th would have given me great comfort had not your most unjust reproaches wrung my heart. I only went to the supper to prevent people talking, but you think it a crime. How unfortunate I am to have done a thing which displeases you, through motives of policy! You know I am compelled to keep a watch over myself before others, and to go about as usual, therefore you are wrong in finding fault. . . . I love to see you a little jealous, but am thoroughly distressed when you think I have consoled myself in your absence with such as La Platen. Assuredly you are going out of your way to wound me. Why take such a contrary view of my conduct? What I did was only for love of you, but you will not take policy as an excuse. Maybe I have done foolishly; but think what you did a year ago in going to Monsieur Colt's ball—a great *fête* as it was. You danced much and merrily, and in truth I was hurt, but policy excused it, and, after reading this I hope you will not think me so guilty, for what comparison is there between my walking near the river while others dance, and your dancing with many men? What I say is true, 107[1] will bear witness. I swear that I walked with him while they were dancing, and did not go near the lively company; but, on the contrary,

[1] The key to this cypher is lost.

without talking to anybody, I walked on the ramparts behind the cavalry barracks. After refusing La Platen's invitation three times, I could not very well excuse myself for that night, for La Rose had taken me apart, saying, 'Why are you so melancholy? Are you ill?' I went, therefore, and paid my respects to La Platen. They were at the supper table. After supper they went out walking, but I sat down on a heap of fresh mown grass without saying a word to any one. I thought only of your charms and the joy of being loved by you, and then I took my way home without seeing La Platen any more. This I vow on my damnation; and I swear to you also that I will never put foot in her house again except to take leave, be the consequences what they may; so you can be at rest about that. I will never see her again, though it ruin me. All your entreaties will avail nothing.

"Now let us look into your conduct a little—you, so tender and true—and see if we can find a flaw in you. Prince Max went to your apartments, which could not be helped, and Balati escorted you downstairs. I heard this last piece of news through my enemies. You know well I am jealous of him. What, too, of the long conversations with Sitardie, which took place 'only because he spoke of me'? However, I am satisfied, if you would be the same. But you are so suspicious—and why? Because I went to a supper without eating, and to a dance without dancing. That is all my guilt. Do you think I would forsake my divinity for a supper? Really, if you have such a

bad opinion of me, you had better leave me. But I tell you, without losing my temper, I love you passionately and without guile, and no interest, no beauty, no supper, and no dance will ever make me do anything which would give you just cause to suspect me. I entreat you, tell me frankly if you are cured of your suspicions."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[LUISBURG, undated.]

"I returned with the Electress very late last night from Brockhausen, and had the joy of finding your letter, which I read over at least ten times. I should have answered it before going to bed if it had been possible. But first let me tell you what happened at Brockhausen. We arrived there Sunday at nine o'clock in the evening; we supped, and after the company had retired I sat up with my parents until nearly two o'clock. They entered into my grievances very fully; they are not pleased with the way the Court of Hanover is acting, and they think exactly as I would have them do. My husband, it appears, wrote a very civil letter to my father, leaving him absolutely free to keep me as long as he pleases. You know he wrote to me quite the contrary, and I told them so. They want me to ask him how long he will let me stay away. Let me know if you approve of this. I will await your answer until Monday. I spent half the next day in bed, the other half with the Electress and my parents.

"They say the Danes are certainly marching. I

know not whether to rejoice or be sad, in any case I fear I shall not have the joy of seeing you, for they seem determined to keep me here [Luisburg] as long as they can. Max is staying here. I have not said a single word to him: in fact, I should forget how to speak if it were not for the Electress and La Confidente; they are the only two with whom I have any conversation. We left Brockhausen at seven o'clock, and arrived here at eleven, and I had supper in my room. I took a bath this morning as an excuse for not going out. This is an exact account of everything I did yesterday and to-day.

"I must now answer your letter. I am sorry if mine grieved you, but my heart was so full that if I had told you all my anger you would not have got off as lightly as you did. I am satisfied with your excuses, and glad of your assurance that everything took place in public. Yet, even so, I would have given my heart's blood for you not to have gone. Without offence, how can you be such a fool as to draw a comparison between my going to Monsieur Colt's ball, whither I went a fortnight after you left,[1] and because the Elector and Electress insisted upon it, and your going to La Platen's supper party two hours after I had gone, and when you had bidden me so tender a farewell? I never even dreamt that you were disporting yourself in that way. But we will talk no more about it, for I love you, and I cannot be angry for long. Even before you wrote I had forgiven you. I am a fool to confess it; but do

[1] For the campaign in Flanders, June, 1692.

not take advantage of my weakness. Don't give me ground for thinking you are acting a part again; but, on the other hand, don't be so silly as to keep away from La Platen altogether. You know my views on the subject, and it is most important to keep her in good humour; therefore, for the sake of our love, go there as before. It was not your visiting her that I found so bad, but the time and the way you did it—on the very day I left. It nearly drove me out of my mind.

"You seem to mock at the account I have sent you of my doings. Mock as much as you please, but it is true. You tell me I talked a good deal with Sitardie. He told me he was composing some verses on your absence; but you can disabuse your mind of the idea that any one is flirting with me. I shall start at the end of the week for Brockhausen."

"[Luisburg], *Wednesday, June* $\frac{14.}{24.}$

"The Electress talks about you every time I walk out with her; and, as I have told you, I am alone with her a good deal. I know not whether she does it through friendship for you or because she thinks it pleases me; in either case, it is the same. *Je ne peux même entendre nommer votre nom sans un transport dont je ne suis pas la mâitresse.* She praises you so highly that were she younger I should be jealous. I really think she is fond of you; she can hardly show it more, and it makes me quite uncomfortable! She has just sent me word to come out for a walk with her, and so robs me of the joy of writing to

THE ELECTRESS SOPHIA. [*To face p.* 394.

you—my only one when we are not together. Some day perhaps I shall be able to see you as I will, and never to leave you more. I believe I shall go mad, for the life I lead is intolerable. Let us hope for a happy change; let us do everything to be together. I shall never get used to separation from you; I find it harder every day, for I love you more ardently than ever."

"[LUISBURG], *Twelve midnight*, [*Saturday*].

"I could not finish this afternoon. The Electress prevented me from bathing to-day. She tells me I have so very few days to remain here that she wishes me to be with her. However, I shall take a bath to-morrow. . . I have never felt the force of my love for you more than now—except perhaps in our most rapturous moments. I tell you again, my life and my peace are in your hands. *Mon Dieu!* how dear you are to me! how dearly I love you! I shall never be happy until we are together all our life long. When will that bliss come? How I long and yearn for it! Such joy as that cannot be bought too dearly. . . . They tell me La Platen is not coming here after all; I am not surprised to hear it. I should have been astonished if she had come as long as *you* remain in Hanover. She is quite free now, and, should you take advantage, the opportunity is excellent. I am absent, and *les absens sont toujours tort*. But no! you would be incapable of anything of the kind. You are loving, tender, and true; it is a crime to suspect you."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *June* $\frac{13}{23}$.

"I am waiting to show you how absence has wasted me. I must know the hour, the day, and where I am to come. I will see to the rest. But tell me, how will you be able to keep me hidden without endangering yourself? The risk I run is not very great, and to see the one who loves me I would willingly be torn in pieces.

"Let me kiss the beautiful lips that kissed me so sweetly. Ah! when we meet we will show the sweet violence of our passion by the tenderest tokens. I would give my blood this very moment for one sip of your honey lips. I know battles are dangerous for us men, particularly against the Danes, for we always lose; but if you really wish to dispute the fact that I have more passion, more constancy, more devotion than you, I accept your challenge. Know this: for two months I have been preparing myself to meet the attack, and as it is long since I have taken up arms, I might be overcome. Yet I will fight a duel with you with the greatest possible joy. I only wish to know the *rendezvous*, the arms, and the seconds. My weapons will be my eyes and my mouth. . . . Choose a day and hour when duty will not hinder me from coming, and you will see how I shall fly to you. Come out when it suits you. I am glad you give me the chance.

"I am delighted to hear that La Confidente has

put aside her chilly airs, and am curious to know with whom she has been flirting. She will say, 'But, alas! it is a dream. Why is it not for good?' I hope it is Bal aux Fores, though, i' faith, she deserves some one more attractive, more gallant, and younger, for I verily believe she would show much passion for her lover, who would soon make her lose her coldness, for she is passing fair and has a good figure."

"[HANOVER], *June* $\frac{15}{25}$.

"It is very bad the Prince should write in two ways—bad for himself, but all the better for you and me; for they will clearly see what a rage he is in. You must have irritated him extremely. I have heard from Marshal Podevils. According to appearances war will be declared very soon, and as a great favour (which enrages me) they will let me take part in the campaign. I must take it 'as a great favour,' that some one evidently wishes to get rid of me! My regiment will march to the Elbe, and I shall be able to do the campaign, and to smooth matters down a little. The Marshal tells me I may return when they give me an order to do so. I am not to start this week, for he wishes first to learn the issue of a conference which is being held where you are [at Luisburg].[1]

"It is not a little matter that your father is beginning to listen; and, with your mother's help, you may perhaps succeed in your plan, provided you do not

[1] But meantime the Princess had gone again to her parents at Brockhausen.

relax your efforts. Remember, it is the only way for us to become happy. . . . I should not advise you to write to the Prince to ask him the time you ought to stay, for in doing so you subject yourself, and it is always better to be free. Wait first to learn my fate, and when we know for certain what will be done with me, you can go to Brockhausen. If your parents again press you to write, say you know it will displease the Prince and you positively refuse to displease him while you have so little support to expect from your father. But should they promise anything substantial, write anything and everything they wish, but beware of being tricked. That is my little piece of advice. And now for yours. Don't think of inducing me to return to La Platen. All your commands and prayers will be in vain. Had I followed my own inclination, I should have kept to that resolution long ago; but you made me feign and act in a cowardly manner, which, but for you, I should never have done. But you will not catch me that way any more. Whatever may happen, I will avoid Monplaisir like hell. I have seen no lady in this house since you went away. I bathe in the river every evening at seven o'clock, and to kill time I shoot swallows from my window. I hope these innocent diversions will not give you further ground for unjust suspicions."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Brockhausen], *Friday, June* $\frac{16.}{26.}$

"After pining for three days and suffering tortures

of suspense, I have the joy of receiving two letters from you. The desire of my heart is to see you again. I have already told you it is quite easy as far as I am concerned. La Confidente sleeps in a small room near me. You can come in by a back door and stay twenty-four hours if you wish without the least risk to me. Every evening I walk alone with La Confidente under the trees, quite near the house. I will look out for you from ten o'clock until two o'clock. You know the usual signal. You must also know the back door. The door of the palisade is always open. Do not forget to give the [first] signal; it is you who must give it, and I will wait for you under the trees. I look forward with rapture to seeing you; I have longed for it every moment since we parted, and on that account have put off going away [from here]. My mother and father are in a great hurry to return [to Celle] as soon as possible. We can talk over our business when we meet; it would take too long to write about it. I think only of the joy of seeing you. If joy kill, it will kill me. You will find me as tender as ever—even more so. I shall give you so many kisses, and with such fondness, that you will be sorry you ever doubted me. . . . I am sorry that you no longer go to Countess Platen's, it is rather important you should go. As for the other minx, she does not trouble me. I entreat you go there as usual, and so relieve my fears. I am quite easy now, for I believe you will always be mine. Come soon—soon; never mind the day; the sooner the better."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[Brockhausen (?)], *June* $\frac{16}{26}$.

"I make haste to let you know I am here, and I flatter myself you will be as glad as I am. Le Feltam gave me my leave. I have changed my mood. At present let us think only of embracing each other. What joy for me, a hopeless lover! I had not shaved since our sad adieu, but to-day I am clean-shaven and merry-looking. Let every one sing 'The chevalier is conqueror,' and for my sake, for yours, and all that is dear to us, let me throw myself at your feet. See how joyful I am! Until now you have known me sorrowful, but I am beginning to breathe again and forget my troubles. Don't think, though La Platen may be 'free,' she could in any way alter my devotion to you; death itself would not efface it, still less that old coquette. I don't know what I have done to deserve the Electress's favour, but if it does us any good I am very glad to have it."

"*June* $\frac{17}{27}$.

". . . I will not fail unless the command to march prevents me. I am dying with joy and longing. To-morrow night at ten o'clock I will be at the *rendezvous*. *Le signal ordinaire nous fera connaître. Je sifflerai du loin* '*Les Folies d'Espagne*.' If I understand the spot aright, it is near the house, between where the Duke's stables used to be and the house. I will be there at ten o'clock."

"[HANOVER], *June* $\frac{20.}{30.}$

"This is to let you know my expedition ended without accident, except that in coming out of the palisade I saw two men walking about six paces from me. I did not dare turn my head, and so was quite unable to see their faces. One of your women lighted a candle outside the dressing-room as I went through, but I do not know which one it was, for I did not dare turn my head. These are all the incidents, dear heart, except that I found the way much longer returning than coming. The difference is easily understood! I found when I got back a despatch to the effect that I must march with my regiment at the end of the month, and a letter from my secretary which makes me tremble. I will send you the original at the first opportunity. A million thanks for your sweet tenderness and dear proofs of love! Were it not for the comfort and consolation they give me, I should die of trouble, for no man before ever saw himself ruined all at once. But I have found a treasure worth all that Northern land, and I would not change places with that barbarous and unjust King [of Sweden]."

"[HANOVER], $\frac{\textit{June } 23.}{\textit{July } 3.}$

"I shuddered on reading your letter.[1] To what danger I have exposed you! *Dieu!* how near we have been to our ruin! What a fatal accident to occur just at the wrong time! It is so like a novel

[1] This letter of the Princess is missing; it must have referred to some accident after their meeting.

that were you to tell it, many people would not believe you. I had no idea so many people were about, and two of them followed me. I thought it was without design, but I see now that I owe it to my legs that they did not catch me. But I lost myself, and did not get back to my horse until four o'clock. Just think of the time I took in running from left to right and right to left! The favour which Providence has showed us is indeed great; I shall remember it for a long time. Just think how easy it is to be lost. All human prudence cannot avoid an accident, but we have come through safely. I vow that no one recognised me.

"You were sweet to say you were pleased with me, and I am so charmed with your assurances that I cannot thank you enough. I have slept well the last few nights; and I needed it, for the run on foot was very tiring. Your divine kisses intoxicated me so much that I drank a bumper to steady myself. They say the Elector will certainly be here on Monday. See how unfortunate we are. What ill-luck this is! I fret all the more because you are not coming with him. I am going away this day week. They say your father is going to Celle; if so, I hope greatly I may see you again. Think if it can be managed. *Ma petite brunette*, how I will kiss thee when I hold thee again! Meanwhile I dream of thee.

Dieu, pour soulager mon amour,
Faites que je dorme toujours!"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[BROCKHAUSEN], $\frac{June\ 23.}{July\ 3.}$

"I am very anxious. I have not heard from you yet.[1] I have had a letter from my husband in answer to the one I wrote from Luisburg complaining that they tried to lodge Max next me. I also mentioned that you were going to the Urkin (?). He answers as follows: 'You have acted like a veritable Lucretia towards Max. I see that my honour is safe in your hands. I am surprised to hear Königsmarck is going to take part in the campaign to the Urkin (?); it will do him no good. I fear he has not paid his debts yet, and from all they say he will get into trouble in consequence.' I am in sore distress about this. Tell me what you wish me to answer him, for I am sure my husband takes a malignant delight in writing thus, he is full of envy and hatred against any one like you, who is charming and deserving, and merits distinction. I am engrossed with my own plans. My mother is beginning a business which will be very good for me if she succeeds. She wants to make over her Celle estates as a present, with money, to me. She spoke about the business to Bernstorff, who promised great friendship, and offered his services on my behalf. If they would only employ him I am sure he would see I had my rights. If he would take up my interests my father would do everything that could be wished. We must try every means in our power. The matter is too near my heart for me

[1] The letters must have crossed.

to neglect it, for upon the issue hangs all my future happiness."

"[Brockhausen], $\frac{\text{June } 25.}{\text{July } 5.}$

"We start to-morrow after dinner for Celle. I am very glad, for it brings us nearer to one another, and I shall hope to have news of you oftener. I have not been able to write from here as much as I should have liked. I am broken with many anxieties, and tremble lest your embarrassments may take you to Flanders. Your Swedish business worries me also, and to crown my misery I cannot see you, and shall have to spend a whole month without you—you, who are the only joy of my life. *Grand Dieu!* how weary I am of the existence I lead! how sad and hopeless it all is! The end of my misery seems still very far off. But I am wrong to complain, since you love me: that thought should console me for everything, for as long as you do not change I shall be happy. . . . I hear my mother. Adieu."

CHAPTER XX

LOVE'S BITTERNESS

O love, O thou that, for thy fealty
Only in torment dost thy power employ,
Give me, for God's sake, something of thy joy,
That I may learn what good there is in thee.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

THE Princess spent the month of July at Celle and Wienhausen with her parents. She did not once meet her lover, who remained at Hanover daily expecting orders to start on the campaign against the Danes. For, contrary to expectation, and despite the mediation of an Imperial envoy, who journeyed to Hanover on purpose to arrange matters, the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover came to an open rupture with Denmark and Sweden over the fortifications of Ratzeburg, and Denmark sent troops to demolish them. This, of course, was tantamount to a declaration of war. It was an anxious time for the little Court of Celle, for the Danes were far superior in numbers, and if successful at Ratzeburg they might follow up their advantage by entering the Duchy and even seizing Celle itself.

It was especially unfortunate for the Princess, who, absorbed in her mad passion and desperately unhappy,

had come to the conclusion that she could no longer live at the Court of Hanover, or indeed anywhere apart from her lover. She therefore concentrated her energies on obtaining a grant of money from her father, a sum sufficient for her to maintain an establishment of her own. The plea for independence was reasonable enough, for she had been very unfairly treated in her marriage settlement; and at any other time the Duke, ignorant of the real reason for which she wanted the money, might have been disposed to listen, but now, with the expense of raising many troops and the possibility of defeat and ruin, he was quite unable to accede to her wishes. Without money things must e'en go on as before, for separate establishments were expensive, and flight was even more so, and Königsmarck, wealthy though he was, had none at this juncture. He was crippled with gambling debts, he had neglected his affairs, and the King of Sweden threatened to confiscate his estates. The lovers were in despair; everything fought against them; all around was war and rumour of war; while, to add to it all, Königsmarck was now to be sent away on a campaign against the Danes. Yet, as usual, their letters are filled alternately with ardent love and fierce jealousy; their love was not of a nature to give either of them any rest, even if things had gone smoothly. The proximity of Prince Max, despite the fact that he was the Princess's brother-in-law, was sufficient to arouse Königsmarck's suspicions (a curious comment on the morals of the time), and she, in her turn, was furiously jealous because he gave a farewell party to

which the Countess Platen was invited. But the story of all this is told in the letters, which begin with the Princess's arrival at Celle and close with her return to Hanover. The Princess sent Königsmarck a few lines to tell him that she had reached Celle (and a little poem unfortunately lost), to which he replied.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, $\frac{June\ 26.}{July\ 6.}$

"After many days I received a letter from you. It gave me as much joy in reading it as a starving man would have in devouring a delicate morsel when he had not tasted food for days. It satisfied my craving a little, but I still hunger until I kiss you again. I don't understand in what your father is hard, unless it be in the matter of your separate establishment. If that be so, I am surprised you should have broached the subject so soon, when you had only been home one night. I hope you will succeed, for your mother is on your side, and if your love be true you will work for it. . . . If you really wrote that song you ought to write some more, for it is very well done, and most kind to 'Tercis'; he thanks you very much, and when certain fancies are out of his head, he will try to answer it. Though your mother has promised you two thousand crowns, I fear it will be very little good, but it is well to have her on your side—would to Heaven your father were the same! I hope I shall not offend if I implore you, in case your mother warns you against me, not to let her make the least impression on your mind. The officious attentions

of Prince Max and of those of whom you do not write, as well as the conversation you had with him, displease me very much. You asked me if you might speak to him, and you did so without my consent. Why did you not tell me? . . .

"I am a little reassured, for Prince Max has just arrived. Tell me all about the foreigners who have been at Celle. Marshal Podevils asked me yesterday to come and see him to-day, as he had something to say. I went about eleven o'clock. He said that having been always one of my friends, he wished to warn me some one had spoken to him about us, saying: 'What a row there will be if there should really be an intrigue between them!' I answered: 'Monsieur, since the day you warned me of the Elector's suspicions I have not spoken to Madame la Princesse *tête-à-tête*'; and I promised him to be very discreet. He said he told the person who mentioned the matter that he would answer for me, and it was better not to speak about such things. He would not give the person's name, but I think it is a friend of yours and mine, 110.[1] The Marshal firmly believes this gossip originates with La Platen. He is on your side and pities you much, and it is kind of him to have warned me. He declared that the Elector was no longer suspicious, which is a comfort.

"The companies of infantry are marching, but my regiment remains near Hanover for a few days. Whether the Danes advance or not, I shall still have

[1] 110, probably some courtier at Hanover, but the key is missing. (?) Sitardie.

to go with the army. I must start without seeing you unless you can arrange it otherwise. It depends on your mercy and tenderness to say whether I shall be able to kiss your feet, and if my kisses are dear and sweet to you, you will say 'Yes.' Do not risk anything, for precautions must be taken. We are treading on dangerous ground; but when people love as we love they do not consider trifles, and if one holds the loved one, what matters the cost? Were I to see the scaffold before my eyes I would not swerve."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], *Wednesday, July* 8.

"If my letters give you pleasure, yours are the only joy of my life. But I have had one to-day which both rejoices and grieves me. I am *desolée* to see you are not satisfied with me. If I did not mention I had spoken to Max it was because I had not then done so. I had no conversation with him until the day he left, and this is word for word what passed between us. I said: 'Max, I thank you for the courtesy you showed me at Luisburg.' He replied: 'It was only my duty, and I shall always be glad to serve you in all things.' I was rinsing my mouth. Bernstorff and my mother were at the other side of the room, quite near. I vow our conversation ended there. That same evening he took leave of my father and my mother (who was holding my hand). She kissed him, and desired me to do the same. I withdrew my hand abruptly, and went to the other side of the room, whence I

asked him in a loud voice to convey my respects to the Electress. Later on, my mother begged my pardon, and I asked her never to suggest such a thing again, as it annoyed me greatly.

"What Marshal Podevils told you surprises me. I thought they no longer suspected anything between us. I am not accusing 110; all my suspicions fall on 103.[1] Had 110 done so, he would have been the falsest of men; for he swore on his honour to warn me of anything that might be said about me, and assured me he never heard anything. Try to find out from Marshal Podevils who told him this gossip, for it is of consequence if the Elector suspects anything afresh; if not, I count it of no importance. They are all very much pleased with my conduct here; the Electress spoke of me in the highest terms. I little expected you to tell me you are still going with the army—if you can. The blow stuns me. Why did you let me think you were going to stay when you all along meant the contrary? I am deeply hurt to think you are going far away from me, perhaps for long. Were you to stay, in three week's time I should be able to see you again. How I long for it! How dull and tedious are the days! You are all my joy. La Confidente and I are always thinking how we can manage things for you to come here; but the difficulties make me feel hopeless. I long for you with passionate longing.

"*Grand Dieu!* If you go away without seeing me I shall die. . . ."

[1] I cannot find the key to these numbers in the cypher.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, $\frac{June\ 28.}{July\ 8.}$

"I advise you not to speak of me so frequently, and not answer the Prince unless you wish to write to him; in that case you might say that you asked me when I took leave of you why I was not going to Flanders, and I said I had first to raise money to pay my debts in Flanders. I think you can easily say this; it would do neither harm nor good, so please yourself, and do whatever may be most *à propos*. Pray be on good terms with Bernstorff; but beware! Do not let him see you are estranged from the Prince, and don't let him guess that you wish the money to retire upon some day, and prevent your mother from making a fuss or saying anything about it. Mind you take my advice. You must not ignore the fact that everything Bernstorff knows La Platen knows; and business of this consequence is liable to be known by them simultaneously. Do not fret about my losses; they are not very great, and if I lose villages I gain a divinity, who is worth more to me than all the kingdoms put together. Your vows of constancy console me for all my troubles."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], *Friday*, $\frac{June\ 30.}{July\ 10.}$

"I witnessed yesterday a scene between my father and mother which gave me much food for thought. One could not imagine anything more unkind and

bitter than the things they said to each other. Buccow[1] was the cause; my father defended him, which made my mother desperately angry. I trembled to see two people whom love alone united so much exasperated at so little; indeed, they threatened to leave one another. Two hours after they made it up; but my mother was stung to the quick by my father's words, and with reason. You may imagine she has very little influence if she cannot succeed in a business she has so much at heart. It doesn't make me hopeful about my affair, for all my trust was in her, and I see it is enough for her to wish a thing for it not to be done. My father is hard beyond imagination. I am far from expecting great things of him and I see from his manner towards my mother that one cannot believe in his kindness; so I am in a very bad humour to-day. . . ."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *Friday*, $\frac{June\ 30}{July\ 10}$, *Twelve o'clock midday.*

"The life I have been leading since the Court returned must, I fear, give you cause for much jealousy, for I am playing every night with ladies, and, without vanity, they are not ugly nor of mean rank. I crave your pardon, but I cannot live without a little pleasure, and one of them is so much like you that I cannot help being in her society. You will be curious to know her name, but I will not tell, for fear you may forbid me to pay her my court. I cannot forget those delectable moments at Brockhausen. What pleasure!

[1] Buccow (*Le Bâtard*), the illegitimate son of the Duke of Celle.

what transports! what ardour! what rapture we tasted together! and with what grief we parted! Oh that I could live those moments over again! Would that I had died then, drinking deep of your sweetness, your exquisite tenderness! What transports of passion were ours! . . . I will always be your true lover, absent or present, wherever you may be, and whatever may befall. La Platen has appeared dressed in a ridiculous yellow cloak."

"[HANOVER (?)], *Sunday.*

"You ask me to give up the campaign. I will obey you blindly without reflecting, but on one condition, if to save my honour I must needs go once more you will give me leave. They tell me that General Pless, in Denmark, is disgraced; and if that be so, that was the post they wanted to give me. The terms were very advantageous, but it does not matter now. The Elector has gone to Brockhausen, that charming place where you were. Will that sweet hour ever come again? One of my manœuvres to deceive my servants is to spend a few nights on the soft grass, unless it rains."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], *July.*

"I am inconsolable at finding so many difficulties in the way of our meeting, but I could not dream of exposing you to danger, and you know how dangerous it would be. Pity me! I have no comfort in the world but you, yet everything is against us. Your tender caresses still linger in my memory; I feel them

still. Ah! how I long for a return of those moments! But the joy would kill me verily. Had I not received a letter from 205[1] before I got yours, you would have put me in a fever by speaking so much of your pleasures and the lady you flirted with; but I am free from anxiety, thanks to her, for she writes to me: 'Yesterday all the ladies were at Court; but they must have been very dull, for I saw our courtiers languishing and not flirting at all. A man must be *blasé* indeed to be reduced to playing with children. Yet that is what Königsmarck did all the evening; he passed the time making houses with cards for the little princess and the little chevalier.[2] I admired him for it, because he seemed anxious not to give his lady-love cause for jealousy—that is, if he has one, but it is hard to say whether he has or no.' You may imagine how your ways delight me and bind me more strongly to you. But there is much malice, my very dear one, in leaving a poor woman in such dire anxiety, for you had not the charity to tell me the name of the lady with whom you were enjoying yourself. Except for knowing how admirably you behave, 205's letter does not give me much pleasure; I am terribly afraid she may suspect something. You ought to be the proudest man going, for every one admires you. You are a universal favourite—even old ladies cry out about

[1] This number cannot be traced; it must be some Court lady at Hanover.

[2] The little Princess Sophie Dorothea and Prince George Augustus. This and the following letter contain the only mention of the Princess's children throughout the correspondence.

your charms. As for me, I count it the highest glory to possess such a lover. Love himself is not more beautiful and charming. You unite tenderness and faithfulness with the most perfect manners. Nothing is wanted to complete my bliss but to see you again and never leave you more. I spend many sleepless nights thinking about it all; it would be infinitely more pleasant were I to spend them in converse with you, Beloved. That is a joy I cannot hope to grasp for several days yet; but I am resolved not to delay much longer.

"The Electress told my mother that nothing could be more hideous than La Platen's yellow cloak. I rejoice that neither she nor her cloak will come in my way. I am thine, my beautiful one. I will die all thine."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *July* $\frac{2.}{12.}$

"I am grieved to hear that your mother has quarrelled so with your father about Le Bâtard. It is easy to see which side is the weaker, and I fear we can hope for nothing. You will be compelled to devote yourself more closely than ever to the Prince, and I shall have to seek some corner of the world, and beg for bread that I may not starve. Frankly, your father's conduct surprises me; there is no doubt it is prompted by La Platen, through Bernstorff, for she rules him absolutely and he is almighty with your father. Your preceding letter cheered me much, for it seemed that Bernstorff

wished to interest himself on your behalf; but he is as deceitful as the devil, and thinks to trick you. Do not trust his smooth words, but let him show his good will in deeds. . . . The Elector has gone to Herrenhausen. I asked Prince Max where he is to be lodged, and—would you believe it?—he is to be put in your father's apartments next your own. You may imagine my dismay. I cannot advise you to return, for as soon as you are back they will make me march. When you are at Herrenhausen and Prince Max lodged, for all intents and purposes, in your apartments, and I forced to leave just when I hoped to find joy and satisfaction—when all this happens, what will become of me? I suffer every kind of misfortune—loss of money, family quarrels, and false friends; twenty men who were under me are advanced above me; now they are trying to make me lose my reputation, and, what is worse, I am always sent away from my own love.

"The party was very merry. The little prince and princess danced, but I did not join. I walked with some others by the river, and withdrew early, abandoning myself to my sorrow and tears, which I shed abundantly. When I had undressed I paced alone on the ramparts until one o'clock. . . . Monsieur Rosse came here yesterday. He brings news that the Danes are marching and will surely bombard Hamburg. You cannot believe the joy this news gives me, for I may see you sooner than I thought. Marshal Podevils has left without any one knowing whither he has gone. That is mysterious. God

grant us a happy ending to our troubles, for I am at the end of my tether!"

"[HANOVER], *Monday morning, July* $\frac{3.}{13.}$

"The enclosed letter will show you how my affair in Flanders is going on, and I send one also from my secretary; tell me what you think of it. It seems he wishes to free me from my chains, but they are borne with joy; all the arguments in the world will not make me go far away from you. Who are the people who are trying to draw Prince Max again into a troublesome intrigue? and how go things with your father and mother? Does your mother still hope to succeed in your cause, or has she given it up?

"I went to pay my respects to La Platen yesterday, and she proposed *une partie pour dîner chez un cabaretier*, each man to take his lady. I said promptly, 'I will take Madame la Capitaine.' La Platen became as red as scarlet, and screamed out, 'I will take Monsieur Balati.' She was in such a temper all through dinner that every one noticed it. I doubt if she will forgive me the slight; but that is the least of my troubles. So long as you are faithful I count the rest as nothing."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[WIENHAUSEN], *Wednesday, July* $\frac{5.}{15.}$

"I am at last out of anxiety; to-night I received two of your letters. I am grateful for your kindness in granting my prayer about the campaign, and I

vow I will never ask anything that might harm your honour. As they tell you, Pless[1] is disgraced, and they formerly offered you his place; it is certain they will now offer it again. They are sounding you about it. I am terribly frightened every time promotion is offered you, though I am greatly distressed to think that I am the cause of your refusing it. Yet I should die of grief if you were to accept, for it would take you away from me so far that it would scarcely leave any hope of my seeing you again. You know well enough that without you life is nothing to me; you take the place of all. Do not abandon me, for the sake of the love I bear you.

"I tremble at all you tell me about your embarrassments; I feel them more than if they were my own, for you are dearer to me than myself. My father and mother have quite made it up, and are on better terms than ever. I do not give up all hope of getting my wish, and I will not throw up the game even if they refuse me. But I find this a very unfavourable time, for they talk of nothing but the war, and difficulties arise on every side. We must wait until a more convenient season. My father is more affectionate to me than ever, and my mother overwhelms me with kindness; every day she assures me that all she possesses in the world is for me, so I am at rest about that. If only my father were the same I should be free of my troubles. I will die rather than 'devote myself to the Prince,' as

[1] "Monsieur Pless, who formerly belonged to the Prince of Denmark."—*Vide* Colt's *Despatches*.

you think I shall be compelled to do. There is no difficulty I will not conquer to be united to you. It is the dearest wish of my heart, and I think I shall succeed. I trust to the good will of Bernstorff. My mother urges him every day to make the estates of the Duchy give me thirty thousand crowns; but this terrible war will delay the business.

"I gather from your letter that I must not think of coming back to Hanover while Max is lodged near me. We are really very unlucky; everything conspires to vex us, in little things as in great. I hope he will soon tire of staying at Herrenhausen and return here. If that happens, I shall start at once to join you. . . . You will always be the arbiter of my destiny. The more I read your letter the more I am touched by it. You tell me you will be obliged 'to seek some corner of the world and beg bread that you may not starve.' Do you count me as nothing? and do you think I will ever give you up, whatever may happen? If you were reduced to that extremity, be sure nothing in the world would hinder me from following you; I would starve with you. *Mais, mon Dieu!* do not let us give way to such sad thoughts. We may perhaps be happier than we think. Let us love and comfort one another, whatever may befall. Perhaps our sorrows will end as I have foreshadowed; for I hope to get what I wish when things right themselves. I will continually urge it, so that it will be hard to resist me.

"You ask who are those who try to stir Max up

again. They are Denmark and Wolfenbüttel. It is quite true, for my father told me, and it is feared he will yield. You have forgotten to send me your secretary's letter and the one from Flanders; pray remember to do so. I fear if you irritate La Platen too much she will revenge herself. Deal gently with her, but not too gently. I know well she will harm me all she can, but I love you so passionately that I cannot be reasonable."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"*Tuesday evening.*

"I forgot to enclose the letters I mentioned, so I send them now. The review of my regiment prevents me from sending this by the midday post. My affairs in Sweden are as bad as they can be, and your prospects with your parents are perishing. It is enough to make us despair. . . . Some officers are just coming in; I am obliged to end. *Adieu, mon ange.* How dearly I love you! *Adieu.*"

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Celle], *Friday, July* $\frac{7}{17}$.

"Are you not ashamed to write me such short letters? The one yesterday is rude in its curtness. I do not think there are more than ten lines. True, you make excuses about your officers and duties; but I am not satisfied with such reasons, for I have every day more obstacles than you will ever have all your life, yet I overcome them, and write letters so long that I fear they weary you. Your secretary's letter

conceals something which you can easily find out if you like. Farewell. This will be short, after your example."

"[Celle], *Sunday, July* $\frac{9}{19}$, *One o'clock in the afternoon.*

"If the Count de Steinbock[1] and Count de la Gardie are still with you, and intend coming here, I entreat you to come with them. It is a feasible pretext. I don't think any one could find fault. I hope when you get here Love will aid us, and we shall find means of seeing one another. It will be much easier to see you here without any fuss. I shall die if I have not the joy of embracing you. I picture such delights when we meet that I am in ineffable transports. Should you come, let me know beforehand, so that the excess of my joy may not betray me. I tremble lest it may lead me to do some dangerous, extravagant, and ridiculous thing."

"[Celle], *Monday, July* $\frac{10.}{20.}$

"If you knew the joy the eagerness you show for us to live together some day gives me you would see I have nothing else in my head but to succeed in the business I have in hand. I have always feared it was only your kindness for me that made you suggest it, and your inclination had no real part; but I am quite free of that trouble now, for it really seems you want it as much as I do. Be sure I have nothing

[1] Count Steinburg (or Steinbock) was an Imperial envoy, who was probably at Hanover trying to arrange matters about the Danes on the part of the Emperor. Colt mentions him a little later as being in the Palatinate on a similar mission.

so near my heart, and I shall move heaven and earth to succeed. Can you doubt that I would sacrifice with pleasure the whole universe for you? I ask of God only an opportunity to prove what I say. I count all else as nothing: you alone suffice for me. My ambition is limited to pleasing you and keeping your heart true. You take the place of crowns, kingdoms, and thrones to me, and all the universe would not console me for your loss.

"I don't think I can make Max move from where he is lodged at Herrenhausen; I have no pretext, for our apartments are quite separate, and have no communication whatever except by one door, which I can close if I choose. All my women will be lodged around me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday morning, July* $\frac{11.}{21.}$

"You are glad, I believe, I wrote you that short letter, so that you might have something to scold me about. I did it on purpose, so you might know by experience what it is like. I have more than ten of yours even shorter than mine, but *I* did not call you rude for so writing. You have license to call me what you like, but you are unjust not to accept the excuse of my military duties. I know one ought never to admit any obstacle to one's love, but, *ma chérie*, how many times have you not made excuses—the sentinel, the watch, or some silly tale of people hanging about? Have I ever said a word? have I not shown more forbearance than you? You

are very imprudent to play cards with the General and his wife; you certainly will not win much. He is a very gallant general—at least Prince Max told me so—but he forgets his place in praising you so highly. I should like to see you playing with him—with your smiles and graces. How you will receive this attention and that! and what sweet glances you will cast him to reward him! How your eyes will sparkle at his compliments! I fancy I see you: I know your airs. Don't think I am jealous; it doesn't matter to me. I know you cannot live without admiration, and therefore it is better that it should come from an old fool than a young fop. I talked to Prince Max about your father's affection for you, and he agreed with me that it is *un amitié de singe*, since he does nothing for you. True parental love consists in settling on one's daughter a comfortable sum; and it is just now that your father ought to do it, for if he should be ruined [by the Danes], on what would you live?"

"[HANOVER], *Friday, July* $\frac{14.}{24.}$

"If Count Steinbock had been going to Celle I would have accompanied him; but as he is not, I cannot gather from your letter how I am to come. You disguise your hand so much that I can hardly make out what you write. I should dearly love to come and see you; but it is difficult, for Count Steinbock has gone, and they don't speak about my marching, so I must come *incognito*. But, before I can come disguised, I must have instructions, and it is not easy

unless I am well posted in what I am to do ; I might take a wrong step and ruin everything. I cannot gather from your letter what it is you wish, and I cannot make out from the feigned writing which way I am to come, or even where you are, or how I am to keep myself hidden when I get to Celle."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[CELLE], *Saturday, July* $\frac{15}{25}$.

"As the two counts have gone away, you have no longer any pretext for coming here openly. I did not think the thing was possible otherwise. I am opposed to your coming disguised : it is too dangerous, and, as you say, it might ruin us for ever. Do you think that if I had been able to find some way of seeing you I should have waited for you to ask me how ? I should have taken advantage of it long since, and not have pined like this. Do not dream of coming here without my knowledge ; it would be a miracle if you escaped, and there are no miracles in the times we live. You seem displeased because I don't tell you positively about my return. You are absolutely master of my movements, and if you read my letters carefully you will see what I mean. I quite understand it is not pleasant for you that I should be lodged so near Max ; and therefore I am compelled, in spite of my longing to see you, to stay here. You suspect no end of things ; you imagine that if I had a real wish I could find no end of pretexts to come. I thought you would be satisfied with my delicacy about Max. It seemed to me that if you could have

THE CASTLE OF CELLE.

(*From the "French Garden."*)

[*To face p.* 424.

induced him to come here, I could seize the advantage by starting the very day he left Hanover. But do you decide, and do not think that any reason or consideration whatever will prevent me from coming to you. I will wait for your answer that I may do as you wish; but, for goodness' sake! make it so clear and straightforward that I shall not misunderstand."

"[Celle], *Monday, July* $\frac{17}{27}$.

"I do not think you will stay long enough in Hanover for me to see you there. My father is in great trouble. The Danes are advancing, and have everything necessary to cross the Elbe. That will put me at a greater distance from you. Everything combines to make me despair. I dare not, in the state matters are, press my father about my affairs, for if the war turns out badly things will go hard with him.

"The beginning of your letter is charming. You assure me you will risk your life to see me. How can I show you my gratitude for all your tenderness? But perhaps you no longer feel like this, and your love has gone. If that be so, I wish for death! Without your love what have I to do with life? It would only trouble me, since it is for you I wish to live. I wrote to you yesterday all that you wish to know; that is why I say no more. Your answer will govern my movements; I may possibly get it to-morrow night very late. I am sure the week will not pass without your having to march; everything they say makes me think so. In case that should

be, and I may not be able to go to you, I will point out what you are to do to see me here."

"*Twelve at midnight.*

"My mother tells me to-night that she wishes to take me to Madame Colt's[1] to-morrow. I fear it may hinder me from writing to you—a grief to me; for, were I to write every moment of the day, my pen would never run dry on the subject of my love. I think of nothing but of seeing you soon; the thought fills me with joy. I asked Chauvet, who came back from Engesen to-night, whether my father would set out this week. He assured me that he would not, and said the Elector and my father would not leave each other; so at last I have arrived within sight of my desire, and no longer fear hindrance in the way of seeing you. I much approve of your advice, and am acting upon it with all possible despatch. I believe we shall be fortunate and have everything we wish. I am beginning to hope that good luck will at last attend us. Every day my affairs improve; I will give you details about them when we meet. Only Max worries me. I will not suffer him to stay where he is at Herrenhausen; but as I go to Hanover first, and not to Herrenhausen until late the next day, I hope to be two nights running in Hanover. Perhaps they will let me spend the remainder of the week there. But I feel sure the Elector and my father will set out together, and in that case Max will go with them. I will do exactly as you wish;

[1] Lady Colt, who lived at Celle.

you have only to say what I am to do. Let me find you tender and loving. You will be very cold if you resist all the love I shall bring to bear on you. I think I shall die in your arms; my rapture will kill me. Adieu. Do not forget to come to me the very day I arrive. Were you to fail, I should never forgive you as long as I live. Farewell. In the spirit I kiss you again and again; I would give half my blood to be kissing you in reality."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *Monday, July* $\frac{17.}{27.}$

"I went to dinner yesterday at La Platen's; she showed me a letter from the Electoral Prince, which was very kind, very long, and rather familiar. I hope this news will not give you ground for jealousy, and I hope, too, the fact that Monsieur de la Sitardie is at the point of death will not make you too sad. The young Countess von Platen[1] is very ill, so all the house is in grief. They say the Prince will come back loaded with laurels, so it seems there has been something to do over there after all. . . . I did all I could to induce Prince Max to go to Celle, but he declared that he had business here which prevented him. I rage about it. . . . There is no news here about the Danes, which makes me hope I shall not march for some time. I shall certainly go through Celle if we march towards the Elbe, but I mean to have a private audience of you, so prepare yourself

[1] Countess Platen's daughter.

for it. It seems to me that going to the comedy every day means that you are enjoying yourself. I do not grudge you pleasure; on the contrary, I am glad, provided the gallants do not come into your box and whisper sweet things in your ear, as I hear certain people do at the comedy. I am delighted you should enjoy yourself, and will try to do the same,—that is why I have asked our ministers to supper. La Platen will not be one of us because of her daughter's illness. I fear none of them will be so amusing or witty as your company, but I can live without amusement and you cannot.

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Celle], *Wednesday, July* $\frac{19}{29}$.

"At last I have your answer, the one I have been waiting for impatiently to determine my movements; but I am none the wiser. All I can make out is that you do not want me to come for a few days. At any other time I should have been very angry, but now I am as indifferent as you. You seem to be very phlegmatic about all I do, and I assure you I am equally so as regards yourself. I am rather glad to be in this mood, for otherwise I should have been hurt about the *fête* you gave last night to La Platen and other ladies. Stubenfol gave a full account of it at the dinner table. 'Everybody was delighted. No party could have gone off better; everything showed forethought and gallantry.' I am not surprised you surpassed yourself, the ladies were well worth the trouble, and when a host is inspired by such

charming guests he must needs succeed to perfection. It is easy for me to follow your advice. I feel quite content to stay here as long as it pleases you. Many thanks for all the news you tell me. I am not jealous of La Platen because she has had a letter from the Prince. I am delighted to see so fine a union. I also send no end of good wishes for the continuation of your pleasures; I should be quite distressed to interrupt them by my presence. I don't know how you expect me to reconcile the eagerness you pretend to show concerning my movements with the indifference you display by your conduct. If you had even a little consideration for me you would not behave as you do. Continual pleasure-parties take place. But I am wrong to complain or to find fault with *your* behaviour; it is *my* conduct, forsooth, that is open to criticism! I go, you say, every day to the comedy; the gallants whisper in my ear; they caress me in the box! Is it to fill up your paper that you tell such falsehoods? There is not a word of truth in them. Since I have been here they have played a comedy only twice, and each time I have been in my father's box alone with him. I am always considering your wishes: I am ashamed of it, for I carry consideration much farther than you deserve. But I have said enough on the subject; it is so unpleasant that I am very glad to end it.

"You wish me, I believe, to tell you about my affairs. Yesterday I read over my marriage contract; it could hardly be more disadvantageous to

me. The Prince is absolutely master of everything, for there is nothing I can dispose of without his consent. Even the clause about my dower is so badly worded that they can easily cheat me and take it away.[1] I was very much surprised at this unexpected blow, and so hurt that tears started to my eyes. My mother was moved, and tried to comfort me; nothing could be more tender or kind than what she said to me. She even went so far as to offer to sell her jewels so as to settle on me some sort of an income. At last we decided it would be better to speak to

[1] A fragment of this letter relating to the Princess's marriage settlement is quoted (in the original French) by Palmblad in his *Aurora Königsmarck*, and Dr. Köcher has seized on it as an inaccuracy which goes to prove that the letters are not genuine. Yet it is substantially correct. The Duke of Celle was undoubtedly beguiled into a marriage contract most unfavourable to his daughter. He gave her a marriage portion of one hundred thousand thalers and the estates already settled on her. The hundred thousand thalers promptly went into the Hanoverian coffers (there was no Married Woman's Property Act in those days). The estates were not disposed of so easily. If no son were born, these estates, particularly the lordship of Wilhelmsburg, were to remain the Princess's; and should the Prince die before his consort, this property and all its revenues were to revert to his widow, and her children could only inherit them after her death, and, as a widow, the Princess was to be entitled to a dower of twelve thousand thalers. But the Princess had a son, Prince George Augustus, and so these estates were locked up; she could not realise them or raise money on them in any way. She was not likely to become a widow (however devoutly she might hope for that consummation), and so she was penniless, with nothing of her own save the allowance the Elector of Hanover thought fit to dole out to her for her dress and petty expenses. Her father, of course, might subsidise her occasionally, but that was merely a matter of his good will. Hence her efforts to obtain a sufficient sum to enable her to set up a separate establishment and be independent. In this, as in other things, the evidence is all in favour of the absolute genuineness of these letters.

my father first, as perhaps he would be able to put the matter right. My mother did so this morning, and his answer was favourable. I hope I shall get what I want. My mother advised me to talk to Stubenfol, and ask him to push the thing also, to show him my marriage contract, and point out how unjust it is to me; so that without any one being able to guess my plans, I have the finest pretext ever known."

"[CELLE], *Thursday.*

"I am even angrier to-day than I was yesterday. The more I think of what you have done the more I find cause for annoyance. You have reason to be thankful for having delayed my return, for had I arrived piqued as I am you would surely have had a piece of my mind. I don't know why I revert so often to the same grievance, but, though I wish to speak to you on other subjects, I unconsciously fall back on this one. The cause is not hard to find. Your unkindness cuts me to the heart, and, though I ought to get used to it, I cannot help being sensitive. Here are three unkind things all at once, which one surely should not expect from a man who prides himself on his delicacy and values his love so highly. You will remember you went to a feast at La Platen's two hours after I left Hanover for Luisburg, in spite of the overwhelming grief in which you left me and the sorrow you pretended to show. You had enough self-control to hide your sadness so well at the feast that no one perceived it. The second party, which you say was so innocent, and which I

am willing to believe was so, since you wish it, took place a week ago ; and your most magnificent and brilliant entertainment the day before yesterday. Here are three parties in a very short time to my knowledge, not counting those I shall never know about, which, being secret, are doubtless all the sweeter to you. I am beginning to get used to your unkindness, and so far from spending the night weeping and wailing, as I was weak enough to do at Luisburg, I sleep very well, and wake up fortified and angrier than ever. I am quite convinced that this is a matter of indifference to you either way, because if you had ever so little regard for me you would have behaved very differently. But I am certain you do not love as I do, and renounce all pleasure ; you are incapable of so strong a passion. Do not restrain yourself, I entreat you. Think only of your pleasures ; count me as nothing. No doubt all these revelries will terminate in a complete reconciliation between you and La Platen, or some fresh intrigue. If only my wishes are needed to contribute to your happiness, you can have them : there is no joy I do not wish you. It so happens that Fortune, to give me revenge, has sent hither to-day a young baron from Mayence. He is very handsome, well built, and magnificent. You are no doubt willing that, rather than die of *ennui*, I should amuse myself with him ! I believe you to be still too much my friend to refuse me that little comfort. You see, I am franker than you, for though you sent me word of your *fête* you

said nothing about the ladies and La Platen coming to it; yet the whole thing was got up for her! Of a truth, I am well repaid for living like a nun and shunning every one, even men of sixty, *mais n'importe*. I will say no more! You ought to be ashamed of yourself to act as you do. I will not reproach you; you ought to reproach yourself. But it shows, alas! there is very little love proof against absence. Unfortunately for me, my love does not lessen, and I am too tender and sensitive. Teach me how to learn the secret of indifference. I must end this. In spite of all my resolutions, it might escape me that I love you, and I would rather die than tell you so to-day."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"*Wednesday, July* $\frac{19.}{29.}$

"My banquet, as you call it, was a very dull affair, though La Platen came with her husband. The young countess is still very ill. Madame Busche's coach-horses took fright and bolted, and the ladies were so unnerved by the accident that they scarcely spoke two words, added to which it was very bad weather, for fine rain set in and a great wind arose which made us break up very early: they all went home before eleven o'clock. I did not sit at the centre table, as there was no room; I supped with Harrenburg and a lieutenant of my regiment, and was delighted to have a pretext to escape from my guests. I was a very convenient host; they will not boast much about my attentiveness. But how could I be attentive when

I was so *distrait* and my heart far away with you? I vow I thought more of you than of all my guests put together. My reason for giving the supper was because I am going away soon, and it was the right thing for me to do. I have been so often to their dinners that it was necessary for me to make some return. Do not think I did it to court any one, or with any thought of intrigue. I vow, on my perdition, it was not so. I have told you the true reason; there was none other, I swear to you. Don't draw unjust comparisons. As a man, I am compelled to do many things which as a woman you need not do. Some one has been telling me I have become so odd that it is no use seeking my company. I said: 'When good fortune forsakes a man, what would you have him do? I get no promotion and I am losing all my possessions.' He answered: 'What about love?' I replied: 'I no longer think of it.' But God forgive me, it was the greatest untruth I have ever told in my life."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Celle], *Friday, July* $\frac{21.}{31.}$

"Since you tell me your party was dull and tedious, and everybody went home early, I am fain to believe you; though Stubenfol said nobody ever was so merry a host as you, and the party did not break up until after midnight. I can quite believe you found the time so short: the company was too pleasant to admit of weariness. You must give me leave to doubt that you thought more about me than of any one present.

I am not vain enough to flatter myself so much. I count myself happy if you think of me in your spare time (should you have any), for every one is talking about your entertainments and continual parties, at which you shine so brilliantly. I rather think you spoke the truth when you said you 'no longer thought of love.'

"But I must speak of something else. I want to forget all about that affair: my thoughts kill me. I should have been willing to defer my return to Hanover for a few days had your *fête* not taken place just then to distress me, for the very moment you ask me to stay here you plunge into deeper pleasures there. What can I think of your conduct? Must it not convince me that you did not want me, so that you might better amuse yourself, and you feared my presence would be a hindrance? You ask me to comfort you, but it is from you I expect comfort. I certainly have no pretext for staying at Hanover only three or four days; I shall very likely be there for twelve or fifteen days at least, so take precautions accordingly. I think you will know your movements before the end of next week, and when you are certain, let me know positively what you wish me to do. I shall not think of leaving here until you let me know."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"HANOVER, *Friday, July* $\frac{21.}{31.}$

"I have received your very charming letter. Your 'handsome and well made man' and Monsieur le Huguenot more than convince me that you find your

stay at Celle very pleasant. All I have to say is this—if you are not pleased with me, I am even less pleased with you, and if this sort of thing goes on I will no longer be your dupe. I am quite able to find answers to all your accusations, but I will shorten my letter for fear of keeping you from a pleasant conversation or a walk. I am, Madame, with much respect, all yours."

"*Sunday,* $\frac{\textit{July 23.}}{\textit{August 2.}}$

"At last I am in a fit state to answer you about your baron from Mayence. I have taken a few hours to settle my bile, and I am now cool enough to write and tell you the vengeance you propose to take is too small, even if I have sinned as much as you think; but my oaths, attested by Gohr and d'Els, whom I can call as witnesses, must surely convince you that Stubenfol lied. Don't you think you have been a little quick to take your revenge? I must needs send my witnesses, since you will not believe my word of honour. In any case, I will never forgive your tricks with the baron. Your natural tendency shows itself again. You are only too glad to seize any pretext for flirting; you would rather die than miss the chance. What am I to think of you? You know my weakness: I am naturally jealous, and such behaviour as yours makes me a hundred times worse. How many times have you urged me not to give way to violence, but first to hear your excuses and the truth? If you were piqued about my supper, why didn't you write and scold me as much

as you liked? But no! you were too charmed with the baron; he is young, well made, handsome, and captivates you,—that is why you find, or pretend to find, my conduct so guilty. Oh! it is too much! I can no longer deceive myself. Your letter of Friday confirms my worst fears. Your excuses for not coming here do not deceive me. You are the most unfaithful of women. Go to, cruel one! and flirt with your new cavalier. Why have you held me so long with your deceitful airs and promises? Why have I sacrificed everything for you? You are not content to take away my peace of mind, but you rob me of my honour, my reputation, and all I have in the world. Is it not for such as you that I have neglected everything? You know the state of my affairs. I am nicely rewarded, truly! I will fly from Hanover, where I might meet you. Did not my house force me to stay here, I would leave to-morrow. I hope, however, to find an honourable pretext for getting away; and should the Danes confiscate my lands in Holstein, that will serve. Madame, I am not dishonest, like you. I will send you back everything I have belonging to you, and as soon as I get to Hamburg I will take counsel with my friends as to my future plans. I will return to my own people, and though I may have neglected them the future shall make amends. 'The continual ceremonies in which I shine' are with my dragoons; I am with them every day, drilling them, and for three days I have not been anywhere except to the hunt, in which I take part every day. Have I not

always given you the choice of coming here or staying at Celle? I did it on purpose to see if you had sufficient love to risk coming; but I soon saw something was keeping you back, though I was ignorant of its being a 'handsome, well-built young baron.' You now ask me to tell you positively what you are to do. Why the devil should you want *me* to give you directions? Were I to tell you to stay and amuse yourself with your new lover, or were I to tell you to come here, it would not matter—you would find some excuse for quarrelling with me in either case."

"*Saturday*, $\frac{\textit{July } 24.}{\textit{August } 3.}$

"My letter of yesterday has no doubt surprised you. When I read it over I said to myself: 'Is it possible I could come to such a pass as to write such a letter to the woman who is dearer to me than all the world?' I was ashamed to send it, but after reading your letter three times I determined to send mine on to you. Looking at things in the right light, I ought to be more manly; I ought not to be so sensitive. I am much obliged to Stubenfol for spreading such monstrous reports about my banquet. You know the man he is—'Much ado about nothing.' I don't wonder he found my banquet a fine one, for he ate six partridges all by himself, and drank a whole barrel of sherry. It was the finest and grandest festival he ever attended—was it? Give him the same thing in a pigstye and he will exaggerate it into having been served in the finest flower-garden of Italy. . . .

I was coming to the baron presently, but, for fear I should lose my temper, I will try to go to sleep instead : it is two o'clock. If I went on much longer I should write things I should be sorry to say to a lady."

The Princess to Königsmarck.

"[Celle, undated.]

"I expected to receive an infinity of excuses from you, and the most beautiful things ever written, to appease me. I was much deceived, for I found your letter quite the contrary : you are still too proud to beg my pardon. I could not help laughing to see how you fell into my trap, and how my 'baron' sticks in your throat. Your anger gives me so much joy that I have quite forgotten mine. I am delighted to have revenged myself singly, and I like myself all the better for it. I hope you will be free from anxiety before you receive this letter, for I have sent you the portrait of the personage, and that suffices. But the idea of your giving yourself such airs ! I am the injured one, yet you scold me ! That is rather an odd way to seek reconciliation. How tired I am of being angry—otherwise you would not be let off so easily. But I have a weakness for you which will not suffer me to quarrel with you for long. I should be delighted to make it up with you : you have only to make my mind easy about your banquet, and swear you love me as much as ever. I will forget and forgive everything, and make you see in return that you are very wrong to be dissatisfied with me, for I deserve all your love, and do everything to please you. When

you have realised the injustice you do me by your mad imaginings, you will ask my pardon, and deeply repent of your bad and wicked thoughts. I fear our first interview will be spent wholly in explanations, and the love and tenderness which alone ought to be present will be conspicuous by its absence; but you will have it so—it is not my fault.

"I am coming to you on Tuesday or Wednesday. I have already sent you word by Stubenfol, and I hope to find you tender and faithful. If you be not I shall die, for I am fain to confess that I love you to distraction: in spite of all my anger and annoyance, I have never loved you more.

"I forgot to speak about what you told me a few days ago—that you had made a vow to keep the sixth[1] commandment if we should ever live together. There are no vows I would not joyfully make to be with you always, too: I wish for nothing else in the world; all my thoughts are bent upon it."

[1] The seventh in our liturgy.

CHAPTER XXI

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DANES

There is not in the fierce world anything,
Scorn, agony, stripes, bonds, fears, woes, deep shame,
Kingdomless ruin, but with open hands,
With joyous bosom open as to love,
Yea, with soul thankful for its great delight,
And life on fire with joy, for this love's sake
I would not embrace and take it to my heart.

SWINBURNE.

THE Princess came back to Hanover, and a few days later Königsmarck set out for the war, so their meetings were few and brief. She was expected to proceed to Herrenhausen, where the Electoral Court then was; but she lingered in Hanover, excusing herself on the ground that Prince Max's apartments at Herrenhausen adjoined those set apart for her. The excuse was flimsy, for Prince Max had recently been staying with her parents at Celle while she was there; and though his gallantry had once threatened to exceed the friendship allowed to a brother-in-law, that was long ago, and he now treated her with only ordinary courtesy. But she had raised a similiar objection successfully at Luisburg, and it served to delay her visit to Herrenhausen until Königsmarck left Hanover. His orders to

march came suddenly, on his return from a visit to the Princess, and he had to start the same night without wishing her good-bye. He left her apartments piqued because she seemed to be in a hurry for him to go: in truth, she was conscious of being watched by spies, and snatched every moment of her lover's company with a fearful joy. The first of the following letters of the Princess was written before she knew Königsmarck had left Hanover for the campaign; the next two or three describe an interview she had with Countess Platen, of which the most notable point is that the Countess tried to persuade Sophie Dorothea that it was not she, but the Electress Sophia, who had made mischief with the Elector about her intimacy with Königsmarck. The Princess's letters end with reproaches to her lover for having left her so unkindly, and having sent her no word since he went away.

"[HANOVER], *Monday*, $\frac{\textit{July}\ 30.}{\textit{August}\ 9.}$

"It is four o'clock, and I can no longer hope to see you to-day. *Que je suis malheureuse! Vous n'êtes pas content de moi.* I fancy your good-bye was not so tender as it ought to have been. I am overwhelmed with many troubles. You are going away, and I shall not see you for ever so long. I am so distressed that I wish myself dead this very moment. I have not slept, I have a dreadful beating of my heart, and I am so grieved at not seeing you to-day that I am almost beside myself. Life is unbearable without you: how cruel of you to doubt it! I

cannot forgive your cruel injustice last evening. Is it possible you think me capable of feeling joyous and gay on the eve of your departure—I, who would like to be dead all the days I spend without you, and only live when I see you again?

"My mother has written to me about Max. This is what she says:—'*Je ne conseille pas*, 201 (*moi*) *de s'embarrasser du voisinage; si le voisin fait trop de bruit, il n'y a que faire passer votre lit dans l'antichambre; par là vous éviterez le bruit, et vous éloignerez du galant.*' I shall know what to do! My mother also tells me the Electress has thanked her for letting me come back, and said she was delighted to see me again. My mother says, considering the kindness the Electress shows me, it is the right and proper thing for me to have left my parents and pay her my court, but she hopes at some future time the Electress will be good enough to let me return to Celle. That makes me despair more than ever, for I dare not hurry my return home, since my mother does not wish it, and I have only just come back to Hanover."

"[HANOVER], *Monday, Eleven at night.*

"I have been to Herrenhausen. The Electress told me she had spoken to the Elector, and he thought it absurd for me to imagine such things about Max, and said: 'It is only a silly excuse she is making. I'll take care that Max won't thrust himself upon her in any way.' He also said many other things, too long for me to tell all at once. When he had finished talking, the Electress asked him if she were to repeat

everything he had said to me. At first he said: 'Everything you like,' but afterwards he said: 'No.' I asked if the Elector wished me to remain ignorant of what he had said, because then he wouldn't understand my coming to Herrenhausen after saying I should stay in Hanover, and the Electress (who is by way of being very attentive to me) said she would write to me a note to-morrow with full instructions what I am to do, but, whatever happens, I shall now be here the whole week. The Elector will be obliged to start in a few days, and, from what the Electress says, Max will be one of the party.

"La Confidente went last night to La Platen's, who talked a good deal about me. She said that people do not understand the retired life I lead, and every one is talking about it; but that is the least of my troubles, for I scorn the whole world so long as we love one another. I had hoped, as I can see you no longer, that I should receive a line from you to-day; I am much disappointed that nothing has come. I wonder I have the strength to write to you. I am distressed beyond words at your departure on this campaign. *Mon Dieu!* why have you gone? What would I not give to scold you in person for the injustice you did me yesterday when you thought I wanted you to leave me sooner than usual? I would give my warm blood and very life to lengthen the moments we spend together.

"La Confidente says that La Platen asks to see me to-morrow; I fear she wants an explanation. I expect to be terribly lectured about my ways, but I will

answer her as she deserves. Max is ill: I wish he were ill enough to change his quarters. I am ill too, but my sickness comes from loving you, and only you can soothe my pain and cure me."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday, August* 1.

"I cannot be comforted because I see you no longer. I am sad, too, at not having had a word from you; there may be some coldness, and I love you so passionately that I wish myself dead if you love me not likewise. I had a note this morning from the Electress, and she says: 'The Elector told me over again the same things I told you yesterday—that it would be absurd for you not to come to Herrenhausen through such unfounded scruples, and he will answer for any slander they may circulate; Max will not force himself on you in any way, and you have only to lock the door. So it rests with you to come whenever you like, when you have quite done making a fuss.' She adds to that much love. I will turn and twist as much as I possibly can, so that the Elector will have gone before I get there.

"I fear the letter I wrote to you yesterday has not the smallest amount of sense in it. I was in a pitiable state, for your abrupt departure shows that you are not pleased with me, and I was so ill I could hardly bear myself. La Platen is coming to see me; I will tell you our conversation before I go to bed.

"*Eleven at night.*

"I have had a three hours' *tête-à-tête* with La Platen. The most important part of the conversation is that

she knows that the Electress lectured me last year about you, and said that so far from the Electress speaking to the Elector in the way she wished me to believe, *c'est elle qui lui en a rompu la tête, et que jamais l'électeur ne lui a dit un mot*, and afterwards the Electress told several people that she had warned me to change my conduct with you, as it did you harm. La Platen then went on to entreat me to alter my ways [*changer de manière*], saying I lead such a retired life that everybody wonders at it. People were complaining that I neither look at nor speak to them ; I could not imagine all they say, because it was not natural for a woman of my age to turn her back so decidedly on society, and they are seeking to find the cause of it all. I answered that if I had made any difference between one and another, if I had not treated everybody in the same way, people would have had a right to find fault ; but as I favoured nobody, they have no cause to complain. She spoke several times about you ; she is only too pleased with you. At last we parted as intimates ; no friendship could have been confirmed by more promises than she made me.

"I have not been out of my room to-day, and my journal will be very long. I am going to bed, as I am worn out, but I shall not be able to sleep. How can I, when I have such a big boy as you in my head ? "

"[HANOVER], *August* 5.

" This is the sixth day since you left, and I have not had a word from you. What neglect and what disdain ! In what way have I deserved such

treatment? Is it for loving you to adoration, for having sacrificed everything? But what use to remind you of this? My suspense is worse than death; nothing can equal the torments this cruel anxiety makes me suffer. What an ill fate is mine, good God! What shame to love without being loved! I was born to love you, and I shall love you as long as I live. If it be true that you have changed, and I have no end of reasons for fearing so, I wish you no punishment save that of never finding, wherever you may be, a love and fidelity equal to mine. I wish, despite the pleasures of fresh conquests, you may never cease to regret the love and tenderness that I have shown you. You will never find in the whole world any one so loving and so sincere. I love you more than woman has ever loved man. But I tell you the same things too often; you must be tired of them. Do not count it ill, I implore you, nor grudge me the sad consolation of complaining of your harshness. I am very anxious for fear they have detained the letter you were to have written to me from Celle. I have not received a word; everything conspires to crush me. Perhaps in addition to the fact that you no longer love me, I am on the eve of being utterly lost. It is too much all at once; I shall break down under it. I must end this to-morrow; I shall go to Communion. Farewell. I forgive you all you make me suffer."

This is the last of the Princess's letters preserved in this correspondence; she ends as she began, full of

love and tender reproaches. The remaining letters are written by Königsmarck, and we have to invoke the aid of external evidence to fill up the blanks. Unfortunately this is meagre, for Colt (whose entry book has been a trusty guide) had left Celle on his last diplomatic mission early in July. His orders were to attend the Elector of Saxony during his campaign on the Rhine. The fatigue of the long marches was too much for him, and he died suddenly at the Saxon headquarters, in August, a martyr to duty if ever there were one, leaving his widow, who was at Celle, very badly off. He was succeeded by Cresset, who did not take up his duties at the Courts of Celle and Hanover until the following January.

The campaign against the Danes does not appear to have come to a regular engagement; the object of the northern Powers was rather to frighten the Duke of Celle and the Elector of Hanover into submission than to drive them to open warfare; and even when the two armies were in sight of one another, separated only by the Elbe, a truce was being negotiated. Königsmarck gives a brief account of his march to the Elbe, which seems to have been from Hanover to Celle, thence to Lüneburg viâ Epsdorff.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[On the March], $\frac{\textit{Saturday, August 5.}}{\textit{Tuesday, August 15.}}$

"I hope you had my letter yesterday; it was sent by express, but I fear it may not have been delivered

to you. I went to dinner at Celle. Their Highnesses asked me if Madame la Princesse were still in Hanover. I told them I had the honour of playing cards with her and Madame l'Electrice on Saturday, and since then I had seen neither of them. Bülow gave me so much to drink *que j'avais une bonne raidis*. Later they took me to Madame Boidavis's; but I don't remember what I did or said there, and as I had to return to my quarters, I did not stay very long. Monsieur Goritz arrived after dinner. He talked a long time with Monseigneur le Duc, and I had the honour of conversing with Madame la Duchesse. We talked of serious and pressing matters, but I had so much wine afterwards that I have clean forgotten the conversation, wherefore I am very sorry. Thus the day ended. Wednesday and Thursday went by in marching, hunting, and being very badly lodged. Friday, August 4, I had your letter. Don't think I had forgotten you; all the time I was thinking of you, whatever work my regiment may have given me. I even forgot my duties dreaming of you; you are the only being in the world who would make me forget them. My great anxiety is lest you should be at Herrenhausen. You know what that means: Prince Max is there. . . . I cannot forget how you hurried me out of your apartments last Monday—God knows for what reason. But, *ma chérie*, don't think I suspect you of any mean design—no, I believe you are incapable of any such thing; it was because it was absolutely necessary that I should go, lest we should be discovered. . . . Adieu, *mon ange*. Think of him who worships you,

and don't let him go out of your thoughts for one moment. Believe me loving and faithful and proof against all. Hell and its torments will never make me change. I will be faithful until death, and after death."

"[On the March], *August* $\frac{6.}{16.}$

"Your letter clearly shows that you will always remain a child and let every one govern you. Your mother orders your movements more than you do yourself. Because, i' faith, she tells you the Electress is so kind that you should pay her great attention, you are let in for staying at Herrenhausen and Hanover, in spite of your wishes and mine. Pull yourself together, and remember you are a woman and no longer a child. Don't let them lead you by the nose in this way. It is shameful! Such childish fears do not become true-born hearts. Follow your own inclinations, not those of others. I daresay if La Platen ordered you to live in a particular way you would obey her, especially if she told you the Elector thought it right. He has only to say it is 'absurd' for you to change your plans, and forget in a moment all that you have sworn a thousand times to me. Say to your heart, 'Courage, heart of mine.'"

"[From the Camp], *August* $\frac{6.}{16.}$

"I hope my two preceding letters have reached you. This morning I received yours of August 1. I hope you will be satisfied with what I told you. I did not fail to remember you, but I could not help my letter miscarrying; I swear that I sent it by that

HERRENHAUSEN.

[*To face p.* 450.

peasant. . . . I vow by all that is holy my love for you has not lessened. If my conduct has altered, it is because I saw you so different that I hardly knew you. While I see you so timid and troubled what am I to think? You will not run the least risk for me. If what La Platen told you be true, the Electress's favour will please you mightily. Remember what I have told you about her. I doubt whether the Elector ever spoke to the Electress, or if she ever troubled him on the subject. I know you must be careful. La Platen may be right about that coincidence; there is much likelihood, for the Elector's haughtiness does not agree with what the Electress told you. I wonder you still cringe to the Electress as you do; she will be your ruin sooner or later. I should send her to the devil if I were in your place; but you count her as one of your best friends. She has told you so many untruths that she may not have spoken at all to the Elector about Prince Max, and I firmly believe she has not done so.

"If you had followed my advice, you would not have given any explanation at all to La Platen about your conduct. You would have answered curtly, 'I do as I please'; and it would have been better. If she be pleased with me, it is because I disapproved of my sister's conduct and pretended to keep in with her. I don't disapprove of your making up your quarrel with her, but I hope you will be wise enough not to tell her anything that might do you the least harm. God save you from her. You must look upon her as one of your greatest enemies. I am

not in the least surprised she spoke to you of me—she is brazen enough for anything. I should like to have seen you together—a haughty mistress like her with so timid a child as you! I am surprised you saw her alone. I defy her to tell you the least thing about me which might shake your trust. If I have said anything pleasant to her, it was only on very indifferent matters, and at a time when I had quarrelled with you. Do not complain about my temper, I implore you; no one could be gentler than I am, and I am learning to be patient. You know I hate La Platen with a deadly hatred, and it is indifferent to me whether she comes here or not. I am too much occupied in thinking of you. I love you, I adore you now with as much ardour as I have ever done. Had I not written to you, you would have been right in saying that I don't love you, but this is the third letter I have written on the march. I could not do more, for I have only been at villages where the post does not pass near by leagues. I don't in the least deserve your reproaches, though I read them with some pleasure; for I see tenderness mingled with the anger. Ah! if you loved me as I love you, how happy I should be! But, *ma chérie*, our last evening together was not all that I would have wished. I could not write before I left Hanover, for when I got home I found everything packed up and ready to start, and I was in such despair I jumped on my horse and rode out of the town as fast as I could. . . . Farewell. My superior officers have arrived—Prince Max also."

"[On the March], *August* $\frac{11.}{21.}$

"Since twelve o'clock the night before last I have been perpetually on horseback, and I rode more than twelve leagues without setting foot to the ground. No engagement has yet taken place, though we are within speaking distance of the Danes; there is only the river between us. But war by-and-by,—let us now talk of love. I have yours dated the 4th. With what joy I read it! I love you to adoration. I will do all that you wish, only forgive me if I cannot write you longer letters. Truly, on my honour, I have not the time, and since ten o'clock I have only had two hours' sleep. Love me always, no flirting, and leave Herrenhausen as soon as you can for Celle. Adieu."

"[By the Elbe], *August* $\frac{17.}{27.}$

"We are hard pressed here, and the truce is broken; it looks as though we shall bang away at one another to-morrow. Should anything happen to me I have given orders for your letters and portrait (which I have sealed in a packet) to be burned. I want to die less than ever, for your letter gives me hope and courage, it is so tender and unconstrained. I am delighted with it; it makes me happier than the gods. I am more in love than ever. I have plenty of time to think of my passion, for I am patrolling day and night. You are always before my eyes; I think of you from the crown of your head to the tip of your toe. I reflect I am the only possessor of the jewel, which fell into my hands in so marvellous a way, and count

myself the happiest man in the world. Should I die, if the good God has decreed my death, remember I die your true slave and faithful lover ; and if one can go on loving in the other world, I vow that I will declare myself to you, and all the beauties of Paradise will never lure me from thee. Adieu."

"[By the Elbe], *August* $\frac{20.}{30.}$

"My letters are so short that I fear you may be angry ; yet it is not through negligence, but the calls of duty. We have so few officers that I cannot get a moment's peace. It is now between ten and eleven o'clock at night, and at twelve o'clock we go on guard, which lasts till morning. From three to seven I sleep, and at seven Le Felton gives me work for half the day. Our plans here change every day! I cannot tell you what will happen. I had a talk with Buccow about many things. Among other things, I said your mother was rapidly wasting away. He contradicted me flatly, and swore he would wager three thousand crowns in solid silver against me. If he be right you will be happy. Buccow told me that when you were at Celle the Duchess bathed on the ramparts in the great vats that are there. Do please tell me if this is true, for he said you did the same."

"[From the Camp], $\frac{\textit{August } 22.}{\textit{September } 1.}$

"*Enfant aimable*, how shall I find words to thank you for your dear letter, filled with thousands of loving, tender, charming things! They touch me to the quick. I love you more than ever. I would not change my lot for the Ottoman Empire. Would to

Heaven news of peace would come once for all! I would be at your knees, I would run to you, Beloved, I would bathe your feet with my tears, and die with joy at being united to the woman whose absence makes me pine to a shadow. But I fear such happiness will not come yet, for affairs here begin to drag. Marshal Podevils is suffering from a slight fever; I hope it will not last, or else I do not see much chance of getting away all the winter, if peace should not be made. The suspense is killing me. *Dieu!* what should I do? I would rather leave the service than stay here."

While negotiations were pending between the King of Denmark and the princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, the Danish general took the law in his own hands, bombarded Ratzeburg, and destroyed the fortifications. It was urged that he misunderstood his orders and acted too soon; but there is little doubt this excuse was merely a diplomatic ruse; and, the ostensible *casus belli*—the fortifications of Ratzeburg—having been removed, the King of Denmark signified his willingness to make peace on his own terms. As the only alternative was invasion, which they were ill prepared to resist (and which later happened under the Duke of Lauenburg), the Duke of Celle and his brother had to put the best face they could on the matter, and the next two months were taken up in negotiations for the treaty. All this time the Hanoverian army was compelled to remain by the Elbe, and Königsmarck with it. Fever broke out among the troops, and Marshal Podevils,

the commander-in-chief, was seized with it, and had to be taken to Lüneburg.

The Princess meanwhile had left Hanover for another visit to her parents at Celle, where doubtless she renewed her prayers for money. She could not have chosen a worse time, for the exchequer of Celle was very low, and she was met with stern refusal. This, joined to the desperate state of Königsmarck's affairs and the general hopelessness of the situation, preyed on her mind so much that she became seriously ill. When Königsmarck heard the news, his first thought was to get leave and go to her at Celle; but on reflection he saw the thing was impossible, as his presence was required at the camp. All this is made plain in the following letters:

"[From the Camp], $\frac{\textit{August 27.}}{\textit{September 6.}}$

"At this very moment Bülow is crossing the Elbe with the news that Ratzeburg is bombarded; it is in ashes. His mission is to testify to their Highnesses that General Vaidel has bombarded the place a day sooner than he ought to have done, for the King gave him orders to wait till Monday, meaning all day Monday; but Vaidel, too delighted to open fire, began on Monday at six o'clock in the morning, and at noon the town was all in flames. When the King heard of it, he ran to cry a halt, for he had promised to do nothing before Wednesday. I let you know this because the King is sending a message by Bülow to express his regret and to make an offer of peace, on the basis of the last terms proposed on his side.

So it now depends upon our masters whether there shall be peace or war. In the latter event I shall not see you for a long time, and you may be obliged to flee for safety to Berlin or Amsterdam."

"[From the Camp], *August* 28. / *September* 7.

"Danger is over for the present; and I do not exert myself much, for there is no longer any prospect of advancement for me. So it seems you will probably see your lover safe and sound, unless the sickness all about should catch him. Do not therefore be any longer uneasy about me. The courier who went to Flanders was only sent to make the thing look more important. I firmly believe that they will not make the troops come back, for they are really talking about patching up this affair: rather a difficult task, but our side must make a virtue of necessity. That is how things stand.

"Your assurances of tenderness fill me with rapture; you say you would love me without arms or legs. Surely you wish me to give up the ghost altogether for very joy. You are my idol; I worship you, and my love will only end with my life. I am passionate, tender, faithful; my only joy is to think of your lovely eyes and the fire which darts from them—that sweet fire which burns my heart. But I cannot understand why you went to see La Platen before you left Hanover; for three years you have not been near her, and now you begin. I know you are very timid, but why should you go to see her? Sometimes we must worship the devil lest he should harm us."

"[From the Camp], *August* 29.

"I can see from your letter that you are ailing, for I found in it nothing to move me. I won't scold you, for I want to know if you are really very ill. Don't alarm me if it be not so, and I implore you, don't eat fruit,—there is nothing so bad for one; lots of people fall ill through that. Dysentery is raging everywhere. *Dieu!* if such a misfortune were to fall on me, I couldn't bear it. I am raging to know how you are. I wanted to leave my post and go to Celle; but then it would all have burst, and we should be ruined in reputation. Alas! poor lover! do you consider your reputation when your beautiful one is ill? No, no! let me risk everything. If I do not hear to-morrow evening that you are better, expect me. I will fly to your side, and won't budge an inch until you are well. I beg your pardon, my beautiful one, for all I have ever said to wound you. Do not refuse forgiveness, I entreat you; take care of your health, my life; rest, and spare yourself. What shall I do if a great sickness seize you? I shudder when I think of it, and death looms before my eyes. If I could only be at the foot of your bed to take care of you, it would comfort me a little! But how can I manage it? Perhaps I should not see you at all, for you will be surrounded by your women if it be true you are really ill. Marshal Podevils has been carried off to Lüneburg, and that gives me more work; for though Bocage has the left wing, I have so much to do on the right wing that

I haven't a moment to myself. I shall be glad to end this campaign without having anything to reproach myself with. Adieu. May the angels preserve you!"

Königsmarck to Fräulein von Knesebeck.

"You distress me by not giving me better news. Tell Her Highness not to trouble about writing to me. I absolutely refuse to allow her to write while she suffers so. How joyfully I would go to comfort her were it not for Marshal Podevils' illness! Besides, the truce ends to-day, and I have received orders to be on guard. You can imagine how that news grieves me. I am rewarded by the Duke of Celle, but not by the Elector, so I am raging. I vow, on my damnation, that were it not for my dearest love I would quit the Hanoverian service directly this business is over. I will write of this more to-morrow. I received Léonnisse's sweet messages with joy. I pray God soon to give her better health. Embrace her tenderly from me."

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"ALTEMBURG, *September* $\frac{19.}{29.}$

"The joy I feel at knowing that you are out of danger is very great, and I pray Heaven you will soon lose your weakness. If it will only go away, I shall not mind if it leave you pale and thin and reduced to a shadow. My only wish is that you suffer no longer. I should be unhappy indeed were my love only inspired by your beauty, for in twenty-four hours, nay, even less, your loveliness might change to

ugliness, and then where should I be? My love is founded on more solid qualities, and it will never change even when you are eighty years old. The beauty of person is but a passing thing, but the beauty of merit lasts for eternity. I am not a man to be in love with mere beauty; it often dazzles me, but never blinds me, for I have frequently noticed that where beauty is so great merit is very little. I vow to you still that I do not know when my love for you has made me easy for even a quarter of an hour; even now scarcely a night goes by but I sit up half the time fearing this and fearing that. I sometimes think if I had done right I should never have paid you my court, for I ought to have thought about the future and all the consequences that would follow upon our love. But then, *I knew you*, and I gave myself up to you. I could not listen to reason, but only to my heart. Too late I see all the obstacles in the way of our happiness, and I know you see them too. You have more to lose than I have, in the rank you are; but we cannot alter that, so, *ma chérie*, let us have pity on each other and hate the fate which makes us so unhappy. Do not think that I shall ever repent having devoted myself to you. No, no! my divine Léonnisse; had I to begin all over again I should do the same thing. My passion carries me away. I cannot write so coldly as you did for four whole pages, but no doubt your weakness made your love seem weak. I will say what my true and sound heart dictates. In spite of all obstacles if only you

will not waver, I will show you a constancy that will last till death. Ah! my dear, my dear! true heart wounds are incurable. All joy, all danger, make no difference. They only bring home to me that nothing is dearer than the love I bear for you; and the more dangers, the more difficulties there are to be overcome, the greater will be the victory. The conquest of the whole world is nothing to me compared with the conquest of your heart. When the time comes for us to be together always, we will sing, 'How delightful is this place! Let us taste its delights.' But when will that happy hour dawn? I am waiting for it with intense impatience. It is 'better late than never,'—a detestable proverb for loving hearts, but what would you?

"As the Prince has desired you to return to Hanover soon, it is no use your thinking of going to Epsdorff, or Göhre, but go straight to Hanover, I shall not be done here this month, and the month of November will bring back all our warriors, and as the Prince is one of them we must take advantage of the precious time. If it be true that you have such an aversion to the Prince, I pity you, for you will suffer even more than I do, and that is not a little. . . . The Prince is one of those monsters who devoured the ungrateful Andromeda. Would to Heaven I were Perseus to free you from him; but, alas! what can a mortal man do? . . . I am all yours, heart, soul, and body. Ah! if I could but kiss that little mouth whose sweetness I have so often tasted. My blood riots when I think of it. For eight

weeks I have been keeping Lent. I have not shaved since I left Hanover, I have been living like a monk, fasting on Sundays and not missing a sermon, and all for the sake of the sweetest little woman in the world, whom I love more than my two eyes—so tenderly that I cannot find words to express my feelings. My only joy is in gazing on and kissing your portrait as I lie on my bed, without taking my eyes and lips off it for two hours at a stretch. In those moments I must own that I am not a monk, for my passion carries me away. Adieu, adieu."

When the Princess had recovered from her illness she was sent back to Hanover, and her mother went with her. The Electoral Prince, George Louis, had now returned from the campaign in Flanders, and the Elector of Hanover and the Duke of Celle agreed that it would be better for him in the future to remain at home and see more of his wife and children. Even the Duchess of Celle urged her daughter to attach herself more to her husband. The affairs of the house of Brunswick-Lüneburg were not at their brightest ; the trouble with the Danes was a heavy blow, and the campaign this year in Flanders had been attended with disaster all along the line. The French had captured Ghent, won the battles of Linden and Neerwinden, and besieged and taken Charleroy. The star of William and the Allies was certainly not in the ascendant, and the general depression made itself felt at Hanover and Celle. Under these circumstances it was all the more necessary for the

families to pull together and show no disunion. The Princess was therefore bidden to return to Hanover and her wifely duty, and make the best she could of her lot—advice which could hardly have been more unpalatable. Her dismay was shared by Königsmarck, who, on receipt of the news, endeavoured to obtain leave from the camp and set out for Celle, where the Princess was. She had been delaying her departure on the pretext that she was not yet well enough to travel. Of Königsmarck's letters at this time we give the following :

"[From the Camp], *October* 1.

"Oh, cruel destiny ! oh, endless misfortune ! why wilt thou always distress me ? Scarcely did I see the sun's rays than a cloud robbed them from my eyes. Only this fatal blow was needed. What ! I may not even taste three or four days of bliss with you ? Oh, my dear one ! I ought to have worshipped you from afar, not loved you ; Heaven punishes me for my audacity. You are happier than I, for you hope your mother will find a way out of your troubles ; but I have no hope, and greatly fear your plans will not succeed. Alas ! where am I to look for consolation ? My charming divinity, let me bury myself in some lonely corner of the world, far away from the light, since all hope of passing my life with you is lost. I pity you, my angel ; yet I suffer more, for I am the cause of your pain and sorrow. Take care that the Prince does not find any coldness in you, though that advice is greatly against my

inclination. You must guard yourself against the danger that threatens you. I therefore advise you to cajole and flatter the man I wish you to hate; you must coax him without fail. The tears you are shedding are tears of blood to me. But for me you would be the happiest woman in the world; yet remember, I suffer no less than you. I thought by devoting myself wholly to you that I should be the happiest of men; but destiny has thwarted us. I have forsaken relatives, friends, countrymen, estates, and wealth to have the joy of sometime tasting peacefully the delights of our mutual love; but, alas! I have lost all without gaining my desire.

"A certain friend of our Court told me that they think the treaty will soon be signed, but the Danes make so many quibbles that it is postponed from day to day. We shall still be here ten or twelve days, so the Prince will see you before me, and this cuts me to the heart. Count Platen's son came to see me yesterday, and brought me a letter from his mother, who is reckoned great among us here; I enclose it to you, so that I may have nothing to reproach myself with. My answer was only six lines, and as cavalier as courtesy permitted. When I have the happiness of seeing you, I will repeat it word for word. The young Count told me that the peace would be signed for certain on Tuesday, but as that is too long for me to wait I must try to find some other means of seeing you at Celle before you go to Hanover. I don't know if I can manage it, but I shall know to-morrow. . . .

"*L'envoi.*—I am writing to ask Marshal Podevils to give me leave for three days. I shall be at Celle before you go away. Directly I know I will start at once. I will come disguised. Wait for me on the small staircase two nights running until twelve o'clock. I know the way to the hidden staircase at the back, and will wait for the signal if I reach there safely. Adieu."

Whether Königsmarck saw the Princess at Celle or not it is impossible to say. But this much is certain—he returned to Hanover from the campaign late in October, some weeks after the Princess's arrival there. The following letters (which bring this correspondence to an end) were all written between then and the close of the year. The first is the most interesting, for it shows that the Princess had qualms of conscience about the double life she was leading, though she had not the strength to break from it. Her desire was to flee with Königsmarck to some far-off land, obtain a divorce from her husband, marry her lover, and live in what Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode quaintly calls "an honourable married state." In other words, she wished paradoxically to get rid of the temptation by yielding to it. Königsmarck, on his part, was not backward in sophistries; he reminded her that their thoughts had always been directed towards matrimony, and, once united to the Princess, he vowed to lead a sober and cleanly life. Whether these good intentions would have been carried out it boots not to speculate; but one thing was now certain, Königsmarck could

not remain in the service of the Elector of Hanover. He was still received at Court, but every movement was watched. His stolen meetings with the Princess were few and far between and attended with great risk. Often their appointments were not able to be kept, while the fact of a letter having been missing or a signal misunderstood was sufficient to throw them both into a fever of agitation. Yet he was still so unreasonable that, if the Princess treated him in public with necessary reserve, he reproached her passionately in private. Marshal Podevils warned him again, the Duchess of Celle warned her daughter, and the coldness of the Elector and Electress and the gossip of the whole Court must have been surely more than sufficient to point out the extreme danger of the path the lovers were treading. Yet they rushed on, not blindly, but with their eyes wide open, to the very edge of the precipice. Thus ended the year.

Königsmarck to the Princess.

"[HANOVER], *Thursday morning.*

"If your father be ruined you will have nothing left to hope for, but I believe the demands of the Danish envoys will not be so exorbitant as all that. You think that I no longer wish to see you ; you must know I wish it more than ever, and it will not be good for us to be kept apart much longer—for many reasons, the chief being that should the Danes come into the country—God preserve us !—they might open all letters, and ours also. To avoid that possibility

we should have to break off all communication, and without being able to see or write to you my life would not be worth living. So you think your love for me is a great sin, and you believe God punishes you for it. Great heavens! what a thought! Do not get such an idea in your head, for that kind of folly might lead you far from me. You know that our resolves, our inclinations, our wishes are in harmony with the divine laws, and it only depends on Him above to take us away from the life we lead. I vow to Him after that I will sin no more against the sixth commandment, and I will lead a pious life, free from reproach. Make Him also the same vows—perhaps He will hear our prayers. I am longing for that happy consummation, and with what joy I will repent of my sins! Your caresses, your love, your very presence will be all-sufficient to me."

"[HANOVER], *Saturday.*

"Your letter gave me almost as great a fright as your mother gave to you. My careless valet brought it in to me saying aloud, 'Sir, *Madame vôtre Maîtresse* sends you this letter, and wishes for an answer.' Goritz, Weyke, and others were present. Without losing countenance I pretended to be angry, saying, 'A man bothers me.' They asked what he bothered me about. I said, 'He wants to sell me a horse worth nothing, and he demands the money down.' So I got out of it this time, and I have given strict orders for it not to happen again. After my friends, who were all men, had gone away, I read your letter, and found great

consolation in it. I was glad to find that scarcely a moment had passed after your arrival before you wrote to me. Why did you not rest first? Think of your health and then of your slave, for in taking care of yourself you are taking care of me. I am sure you will not refuse my prayer. Not Orpheus, nor Adonis, nor Jupiter himself will make me jealous this time. I trust your word. It is only our separation that tortures me now. I had a little touch of fever this afternoon, but nothing much.

"The Elector went to see La Platen last evening; you may imagine the good counsel they took together, but it doesn't matter to us. Let us always love one another, and let them do what they like. What do we care?"

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday, Two o'clock after midnight.*

"Your conduct is not very kind. You appoint a *rendezvous*, and then leave me to freeze to death in the cold, waiting for the signal. You must have known that I was there from 11.30 till 1, waiting in the street. I know not what to think, but I can hardly doubt your inconstancy after having such icy proofs of it. You did not deign to look at me all the evening, you purposely avoided playing cards with me, and you wanted to get rid of me. I will go away quickly enough. Farewell, then. I start to-morrow morning for Hamburg.

"[*The next morning*].

"Having spent the whole night without sleeping, I have had time to think over my troubles. I

determined to go, but then I remembered I once swore to you that I would never go away abruptly, and I want to know before I go the reason of your behaviour. That is why I am still here to-day. I shall not appear at Court, for I mortally hate it, and so you will not be able to give me the signal with your eyes; but the other way will let me know if I may come in. I am glad I did not continue my letter last night, for I was in so violent a rage that I should certainly have said some unpleasant things for which I should now be sorry."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"I was sure that you would be dissatisfied with me because I did not keep my appointment. I don't know if you think my reason a good one, but it was a very real one. . . .[1] But, I say, why did you let me wait the day before yesterday two hours in the street? and why do you not excuse yourself? Do you think I am not hurt by such treatment? Read my first letter, you will see the reasons why I thought you ought to have let me know. I did not cry out about it, but that did not prevent me being very much piqued. Your letter of yesterday charmed me: I will make a play of it, for, besides the wit, it is filled with natural and convincing tenderness. I can see it is my charming princess, my Sophie, who wrote it—adorable angel! I shed tears in reading your letter. Your lovely eyes have been bathed in tears,

[1] He was ill, but there is no need to quote his detailed description of his illness.

and I am the cause! Königsmarck, thou dost not deserve to possess Sophie's loving heart."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday.*

"My anxiety will not let me sleep. I go over everything in my mind, even my childhood; but I cannot find the letter I had from you last night nor remember where I put it. I burned one yesterday,—it might have been yours by mistake. Unfortunately the missing letter is the one in which you notified when and where I might see you. It was the last I had from you. I remember it well; I had it from La Confidente on Sunday morning, for yesterday morning she had one from me; but she did not write back, and that worries me. I did not find anything in my hat last night. You remember that you asked me what I was looking for. I answered: 'My hat; some one has stolen my gloves.' You replied: 'No doubt, for Count Horne, or Oxensterne, I don't remember which one it was, had a fringed pair of gloves stolen.' You see, I remember trifles. Do not imagine, then, I could have forgotten such a thing as an appointment with you. Would to Heaven I *had* forgotten, for I fear our carelessness will be our ruin. I swear to you that I looked in my hat, and, as to my gloves, I put them on, but there was nothing in them. I was angry with La Confidente, for she had given me the signal and yet I found nothing [in my hat]. I thought she had not had an opportunity. But I was much surprised on leaving the room to find nothing, for La Confidente

had given me the signal a second time. I wanted to speak to her about it, but Prince Ernest followed me so closely, and Stutenfrich was next to me on the other side, that I could not do so. You will see from my letter of last night that I made no mistake; it was written as soon as I got home. If I had had one from you I should not have forgotten it in three hours' time, despite my poor memory. *Dieu ait pitié de nous, car sans son secours je ne sais comment nous sortirons de cette affaire.* I take Him as witness that I fear not the peril I run. But to lose you for ever, that is what distresses me!

"If I wished to go away from you, it was because I might be able to help you better at a distance than if I were near. They might imprison me perhaps, but that is a ridiculous thought; I will not dream of it. I was admiring you last evening, watching you laughing before that mirror in so merry a mood; yet all the time I was trembling, for I thought that the Elector and your mother were already talking about that letter, and were planning how to punish us. Your cheerfulness makes me suspect many things: sometimes I think you will not see me for a long time and little by little detach yourself from me. Other thoughts come into my head whereof I will not write to you. I am so troubled because of that accident that my brain is in a whirl. To crown it all, Madame Goritz has told me that she knows I hid *incognito* three days in the town without showing myself, and the people I employed in my intrigue had betrayed me, and a dozen things beside; it

would take too long to write it all. This, added to the loss of your note, makes me beside myself. If among all my sorrows I had not the one of fearing that you might weary of me, I should console myself in spite of everything, but that thought finishes me. Should they begin to question La Confidente as to whether I have written to her sometimes, she must say at once that I wrote to her several times from Flanders, but not from here. My brother-in-law [Count Lewenhaupt] must be apprised of the same thing, so that we may not betray ourselves. It is necessary my brother-in-law should know what to answer in case he should be questioned, and know to whom the letters were addressed which my lacquey brought him. I shall say that when I went away I asked him to give the letters addressed to the 'Frole Crunbuglen' to a woman who would ask for them under that name, and he sent on to me the answers the woman brought, without asking from whom the letters came. He must say neither more nor less. If I do not make my meaning clear, I must have a word with you, for it is wise to take precautions in time, lest we be discovered. You must deny ever having written to me at all, but La Confidente must not deny that I have spoken about you in case they ask what I have written to her."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"What will you say, Madame, when you learn that they did not let me go through the day without the misfortune I dreaded? Marshal Podevils was

THE LEINE SCHLOSS, HANOVER

[*To face p.* 472.

the first to tell me to beware of my conduct, because he knew on good authority that I was watched. I pressed him to give me more particulars, saying I did not understand what he meant; but he would tell me nothing except that it was concerning a lady of the Court, and you can see to whom he refers. I was not satisfied, and implored him to tell me more positively in what way my conduct was wrong. He said he would do so to-morrow on condition I promised not to speak to any one about it. Prince Ernest has told me the same thing; and he is not quite as guarded as the other, for he admitted that the conversations I had from time to time with you might draw upon me very unpleasant and serious consequences. I could not wait any longer in the ante-chamber for fear of breaking down after hearing such news. Were you to see the state I am in you would pity me; my eyes, from which a torrent of tears has flowed, would show you how my heart is aching. O God! where am I to find a shelter to end my misery? O cruel Fate! scarcely hast thou let me taste the delights of love than thou plungest me into the most pitiable state ever known! From what I could gather from Prince Ernest, all that he knows is through Le Barbouilleur, and he, no doubt, will speak to me about it, but up to now he has avoided me. I shall know to-morrow: perhaps I shall suffer arrest and death. . . . Nothing has touched me to the quick so much as to find that our affair is in every one's mouth. I wouldn't mind the Electress of Brandenburg's knowing it, if only half the Court

did not know it too. When am I to see you? When shall I gaze into those beautiful eyes? When will they beam on me and declare the joy it gives you to rest in my arms?"

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"For God's sake do not show me any coldness! I fancied that when you left the room you would not deign to look at me. How that seeming affront stung me! I am not the cause of what happened yesterday. You must blame the stars that rule our lives—you must blame them and not me, for I love and adore you, and think only, day and night, of how to please you. Behold my face, my conduct, my steps, my looks,—do you think I fail in the least trifle? do you notice any signs of weariness? Alas! far from that, I love you more than ever. My passion upsets my reason, and that is why I cannot conceal what I feel. Adorable one, I will love thee to the tomb! To-night thou shalt be mine—yea, though I perish."

"[HANOVER], *Tuesday evening*, 5 *o'clock.*

"I do not know if I am to attribute the sadness in your eyes to your pious scruples or to the news of my departure. I flattered myself it was the latter during the game; but at supper the sad look vanished and you were as cheerful as ever. Perhaps your partner's conversation had something to do with it, for he seemed to put you in good temper in a moment. Perhaps I do you wrong: and you restrained yourself so that no one should notice your grief; in

that case I forgive you. I wanted to ask you yesterday to let me affect a cheerful look, but I could not do so. I beg you, don't let La Confidente make me signs when she has nothing to give me, or when she does not want to speak to me. I was anxious about her signals all night.

"I needed your letter to deliver me from profound grief. Everything depends on to-morrow's news. I feel like a criminal under sentence of death, who is to be executed on the morrow. Death would not grieve me more than to separate myself from you. I am more than grateful for your consent to see me; but I know that interview will break my heart, for I have to leave you amid many pleasures, in the midst of Court society, and surrounded by no end of handsome gallants.[1] The Electress will put opportunities in your way and you will not be able to avoid them.

"Until now I have always thought my passion was the cause of our differences, and I have blamed myself for acting in so jealous a manner; but, Madame, the quarrel we had yesterday evening shows me clearly you cannot live without quarrelling. From the most innocent thing in the world you magnify the greatest fault imaginable. When I am in the wrong and offend you, why are you not reasonable enough to say: 'I will not have you speaking to me in that way, and if it occur again we shall fall out.' I should then take care not to commit the same fault

[1] This probably referred to a visit Königsmarck was going to make to Hamburg.

again. But no, you are always picking a quarrel with me. You know such ways distress me, and, added to the wicked affronts I suffer every day from all sides, they crush me so that I do not know what keeps me from taking my leave. I shall certainly do so to-morrow, for it is evident you wish to make my life unbearable. Le Barbouilleur found a good deal of fault with you for talking so much to that violinist. Of course it was not seemly for a lady of your rank; but I am no longer in the state of mind to tell you what is seemly and what is not. I must think about beating a retreat, for the way you treat me is beyond bearing; I would rather lose my sight than be treated so. For mercy's sake, cannot you alter your ways for the sake of a lover who adores you tenderly? Think of all the trouble you have caused me, of all the risks I run, and if there be the least spark of love left in you, you will not let a heart perish on which your image is for ever graven."

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"I am joyful to hear of your return (from Herrenhausen), and as my sickness is ended, if you will allow me to come to you and kiss your knees and ask your pardon for all my suspicions, I shall be overjoyed. I am punished enough for them, God knows; for I have been sick unto death with grief and rage, and I had no news of you. I will see you any day and hour you wish. Farewell."

CHAPTER XXII

THE GATHERING STORM

My star ! a baleful one.
I see the black night, and hear the wolf.
What star?

TENNYSON, *Queen Mary.*

KONIGSMARCK went to Hamburg in January to see if he could raise money, but he failed, and returned to Hanover more embarrassed than before. At Hanover he had long outworn his welcome : the Court had no smiles for alien nobles when they were short of money, and Königsmarck was now a suspect and under a cloud.

Apart from the chronic difficulty with Sophie Dorothea, the Electoral family had its own worries. Prince Max was again troublesome, and the King of Denmark and Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel were secretly inciting him to rebel. The hatred of the last-named prince for the House of Hanover was now open and declared ; and he was an exceedingly dangerous enemy, as his knowledge of the domestic discontent in the Elector's family gave him much opportunity of intrigue. Informed of everything at the Hanoverian Court, it is said that Duke Antony

Ulrich made overtures to Sophie Dorothea to induce her to take part against the Electoral House, and she was not indisposed to listen, though she hesitated to commit herself until all hope of obtaining money for a separate establishment from her father was at an end.

Both Hanover and Wolfenbüttel were full of spies, employed by their respective princes against each other, and the Elector soon got knowledge of these intrigues. Prince Max was sent to Savoy, where he took command of a regiment of cavalry, his father allowing him thirteen thousand dollars instead of the six thousand he had previously granted him. But, as the English envoy shrewdly remarks, this was "only to get rid of him, for fear he should revolt again."[1] Prince Christian, who was also suspected, was sent into Hungary to take part in a campaign for the Emperor. Of the disaffected there remained only Sophie Dorothea, whose intrigue with Königsmarck, if the Elector had but known it, was the most dangerous of all. But as soon as Ernest Augustus had got rid of his insubordinate sons he fell ill, so ill that fears were entertained of his life; these family worries had probably told upon his health, for he was now advancing in years, and had always been a free liver. He was not nearly as robust as his elder brother, the Duke of Celle, whose temperate habits and love of hunting

[1] Cresset's *Despatches*, Celle, March 20, 1694. Prince Max subsequently became a Roman Catholic and Jacobite, and died in open rebellion against his elder brother (George I.) in 1726.

and outdoor pursuits gave him the enjoyment of vigorous health.

The Elector's serious illness brought many questions to the front which had hitherto lain in abeyance. Though there was every reason to believe the Electoral Prince would adhere in the main to his father's policy, yet the Elector's death, which now seemed within the range of practical politics, would of necessity bring about changes—none more momentous than the dethronement of Countess Platen from the position of power she had so long enjoyed. It would mean, also, the relegation of the Electress Sophia to the comparative obscurity of Electress-Dowager, and would, of course, involve the accession of Sophie Dorothea to the dignity of Electress. Sophie Dorothea did not covet the Electoral diadem, but it would be thrust upon her whether she would or no, and the mere fact of being Electress, though she had no influence with her husband, would of necessity give her added dignity and honour. She would become a force for her enemies to reckon with, especially as she had the Celle family influence at her back.

The prospect of Sophie Dorothea reigning at Hanover as Electress was not contemplated with equanimity either by the Electress Sophia or by the Countess Platen, though from different reasons. Countess Platen well understood that the new Electress would certainly not ignore her arrogance as the Electress Sophia had done, and she might even refuse to receive her at her Court. She therefore redoubled her efforts to involve the Princess in

disgrace and ruin, and unfortunately the Königsmarck affair gave her a handle. There is nothing to show that the Electress Sophia took part in these tactics, for though she strongly disliked the idea of the daughter of the despised d'Olbreuse taking precedence of her, her line of policy had hitherto been to give Countess Platen a wide berth, and she was not likely to reverse it now.

The Princess cared nothing for affairs of State, and, absorbed as she was in her mad passion for Königsmarck, heedless alike of appearances and consequences, she thoughtlessly played into the hands of her enemies. Countess Platen was so far successful in her manœuvres that she managed to poison the mind of the Elector against his daughter-in-law, and she inflamed the Electoral Prince against his wife anew. The immediate result was that he put spies to watch Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck, and the Princess's position at Hanover became more intolerable than before. The lynx-eyed Knesebeck became aware of the danger, and implored the Princess either to give up the intrigue or to allow her to retire from her service. But the Princess refused to let her go, and Knesebeck, who was devotedly attached to her mistress, realising that if she abandoned her she would be without a friend, stayed on. She was aware of the constant efforts which the Princess was making to leave Hanover and obtain a residence in Celle territory from her father, and she probably thought if she remained she might save her mistress from desperate steps and follow her in an honourable retreat from Hanover.

But obstacles only seemed to heighten the Princess's passion. Since her return from Celle in the autumn she had not relaxed her efforts to obtain money from her parents; but the Duke of Celle had no funds to spare, crippled as he was by ruinous wars, nor was he in a mood to listen to the language of revolt. With her mother the Princess appears to have been more successful, for we find Cresset, the English envoy, writing to England about this time of "the desire of this Duchess [Celle] to pay thirty thousand or forty thousand crowns *à fond perdu* into our bank, if it be not filled or clogged up." In the light of the Princess's letters we may hazard a guess that the Duchess intended this sum to go towards her daughter's separate establishment, little dreaming, of course, that the separate establishment was but a blind, and she really wanted the money to fly with Königsmarck to some distant land.

Every thought and action of the Princess at this time was directed to one end only—flight, whither, when, and how she knew not. A hundred expedients flitted through her brain only to be dismissed, for one obstacle rendered them all impossible—lack of money; a prosaic reason to enter into the romance of princely personages, but nevertheless a real one. The Princess did not want much money, but some she must have—enough to enable her to live in decent independence. It seemed to her, that when she had taken her flight to some far off country, the Court of Hanover would be only too glad to be rid of her, a divorce would inevitably follow, and

she would then be allowed to marry Königsmarck and to spend the rest of her life quietly with him. That she would have found either happiness or peace may be doubted, but she was willing to take the risk. She was willing to abandon her high position and rank, the pomp and glitter of Courts, a brilliant prospect of crowns and kingdoms, for obscurity, dishonour, and comparative poverty. Whatever view we may take of her ethical standard, we cannot doubt the depth and sincerity of her one great love passion, all the greater because of the unworthiness of the man for whom she counted it joy to sacrifice all she had in the world.

Königsmarck, in his letters and interviews, now as before, was constantly inciting the Princess to revolt, and his alternate temptations and reproaches drove her nearly beside herself. In truth Königsmarck was himself in a tight place. Even Marshal Podevils, his staunchest friend, turned against him ; and when he remonstrated with the Field-marshal about his lack of promotion and threatened to quit the Hanoverian service, Podevils curtly replied that he would put no obstacle in his way. Undoubtedly the most dignified course for Königsmarck to have taken would have been to have acted on this hint and have resigned his commission in a service where he was so unwelcome.

At this juncture the Countess Platen, who knew how hard pressed he was, but who retained a liking for him, sought anew to tempt him from his allegiance to the Princess, and with shameless

effrontery offered him her daughter in marriage, promising him in return the favour of the Elector, rapid promotion in the army, and her powerful support. She knew full well that his embarrassments, though acute just now, were only temporary, and thus she would not only secure an eligible *parti* for her daughter, but would win him over to her own interests.

To his credit, be it said, Königsmarck resisted the temptress, and rejected her offer with scorn and indignation. He went so far as to remind the Countess Platen that there were certain reasons why he should not marry her daughter.[1] These scruples the Countess Platen neither understood nor sympathised with; indeed, she strongly resented them, and she and Königsmarck parted in bitter anger. "A slighted woman knows no bounds," and she soon made her quondam lover feel the weight of her displeasure. A rumour ran round the Court that Königsmarck would be arrested on the ground

[1] This lady, Charlotte Sophia, the young Countess Platen referred to once or twice in the correspondence, was said to be the daughter of Countess Platen by the Elector of Hanover. She married, later, Baron Kielmansegge, Master of the Horse. On the death of her husband, George I. raised her to the rank of Countess of Darlington, and lodged her in St. James' Palace. It was generally supposed that she was his mistress. Her "niece," Charlotte, was married to Lord Howe, but people said she was the illegitimate daughter of the Countess of Darlington by George I. "The King," says Walpole, "was indisputably her father, and the first child born of this union was named George, after the King." But it may not have been true, since Lady Darlington was probably his half-sister. But it is impossible to say, for in the confused state of morals at this period no wonder that relationships occasionally became mixed.

that he had not paid his gambling debts in Flanders and thereby brought discredit to the Hanoverian army.

At this moment, just when Königsmarck's affairs were at their blackest, a door of escape was opened to him by the sudden accession of his friend Duke Frederick Augustus to the Electorate of Saxony. Duke Frederick Augustus succeeded his brother, the Elector George Frederick, whose death was sudden and tragic. The young Elector George, who was weak and dissolute, was entirely under the sway of a beautiful brunette of twenty, whom he created the Countess von Röohlitz. During her brief reign the favourite ruled Dresden with a rod of iron, and drove the Electress from the Court. Early in April, 1694, she died suddenly of small-pox, and the Elector, who would not leave her bedside, caught the fell disease and died eleven days later. Stepney, the English envoy at Dresden, thus writes in his quaint way :

" The revolution we have had here is so sudden and so extraordinary and so surprising that I know of no romance or tragedy to compare to it except *All for Love*. A virtuous Electrice has been slighted like Octavia, yet supported her disgrace with a patience and constancy equall to y^e^ Roman Ladyes. An Elector has revelled in pleasures with an Imperious Mistress (who pretended to be a wife), and defyed y^e^ open Scandall of Adultery and double Marriage ; till y^e^ Scene changed, and y^e^ fond Pair were carried off y^e^ Stage one after y^e^ other (like Anthony and

AUGUSTUS THE STRONG AND THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

[*To face p.* 484.

Cleopatra) in less than a month. Our Saxon-Lady was dressed up in as much State after her death as y^e^ Egyptian Queen was before she applyed y^e^ Aspicks, and was buryed in a Mausoleum where lay three Princes of y^e^ Electorall family, but has had little rest there; For y^e^ rage of y^e^ new Government has rifled her coffin of all her ornaments and has transported y^e^ Corps naked to a churchyard where lye none but Malefactors and those who dye of pestilential distempers. The Mother for having had a handsome daughter is prosecuted as a Witch; as if Beauty without Philters were not charm enough to make a Prince of 26 Love passionately as y^e^ Elector did, and all families here who have either Allyances or friendship with these poor Ladyes are either crushed or shaken by the Fall, as is usuall in mighty ruines." [1]

Truly a revolution—transformation, rather! Youth, beauty, vice, insolent in their power, and suddenly King Death waves his wand and they are swept from the stage and become as though they had never been. What an opportunity for the moralist! It may be feared, however, that the moral was lost on the royal brother Augustus who succeeded thus unexpectedly; and so far as morals went the Court of Dresden lost rather than gained by the exchange. Augustus II., better known in history as Augustus the Strong, the modern Sardanapalus, "the Saxon man of sin," as Carlyle calls him, scandalised and dazzled Europe for nigh on half a century with his

[1] Stepney's *Despatches*, Dresden, May $\frac{18}{28}$, 1694, State Paper Office, "Foreign Papers," Germany.

vices. The Elector George was weak, the besotted lover of one imperious mistress, who ruled him wholly. The Elector Augustus was physically strong, and ruled by nothing save his despotic will and his unbridled lusts. The number of his mistresses bid fair to rival those of Solomon, but no one of them ruled him, for he devoted himself to none. "Constancy is not in his nature," writes Stepney, "and he may be called in y^e^ liberall sense a father of his people, as good King Charles was, for he is an impartial distributor of his bounty, and while he is in y^e^ humour, the first woman y^t^ offers is sure of his caresses."[1] This was written in no spirit of exaggeration. Augustus was "father of his people," indeed, for his Court formed a seraglio, and when he died he had no less than three hundred and fifty-four children by his numerous mistresses. Yet there was a certain splendour about the Saxon Elector. Like Augustus of Rome, he found a city of brick and left a city of marble. During his reign Dresden became one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. He established noble picture-galleries and museums full of objects of art, metal work, armoury, precious stones, porcelain, and glass. Great though were his vices, wanton though his extravagances, his love of the fine arts redeemed him from utter grossness. His reign indeed recalled the declining days of Imperial Rome, when the most exquisite polish and the grossest licentiousness flourished side by side. Reckless, selfish, ambitious,

[1] Stepney's *Despatches*, Dresden, $\frac{\text{May } 29}{\text{June } 8}$, 1694.

luxurious, and despotic, the career of Augustus the Strong affords few parallels since the days of the Cæsars.

Such was the Prince whose sudden advent to power was hailed by Königsmarck as a means of deliverance from his troubles. He had written of him long ago to the Princess : "He is a good sort of prince ; I wish he would become Elector."[1] His wishes were now gratified, and on receipt of the news he posted off to Dresden without delay.

The truth of the familiar Scripture, "Put not your trust in princes," must surely have been proved by Königsmarck more than once in his adventurous career. Yet there were several reasons why he should be inclined to put his trust in this particular prince : they were old friends and boon companions ; they had travelled about Europe together in 1687 ; they had fought together, drank together, and gambled together during the campaign in Flanders in 1692, when Duke Frederick Augustus levanted, leaving behind him a pile of unpaid gambling debts, and his boon companions cursing him, as well they might. Of them Königsmarck was one of the heaviest creditors, for the Saxon Prince owed him no less than thirty thousand crowns. While he was only Duke Frederick Augustus, with extravagant habits and no power, to redeem the debt seemed hopeless, but it was quite another thing now that he had become Elector. So Königsmarck argued, and the present state of his affairs lending him wings, he

[1] Letter of Königsmarck to the Princess, vol. i., p. 325.

set off for Dresden in almost indecent haste, lest other claimants should be in the field before him. He had interest, too, at his back, for without that interest his claim would have been little worth. The new Elector Augustus had long been captivated by Königsmarck's beautiful sister Aurora, and though up to this date she does not seem to have yielded to his solicitations, yet undoubtedly she stood high in his wayward favour.

Königsmarck arrived at Dresden within a week of the Elector George's death. Notwithstanding the nature of his errand, which could hardly have been quite agreeable to the new Elector, he was favourably received, and his petition listened to very graciously. Augustus had not forgotten—not at all; he never forgot a debt of honour, but it was a little inconvenient for him just then to find so much ready money. He was barely settled on his Electoral throne, and heavy expenses consequent on funeral rites and coronation festivities had to be borne; but he would give Königsmarck the post of major-general in the Saxon army in payment of the debt. This was hardly what Königsmarck expected or desired: his wish was a large sum of ready money. But the offer was better than nothing; the post was one of dignity, the pay was large, and the rank and perquisites considerable. The favour of the Elector was an earnest of better things to come (which indeed were hinted at), so he accepted it with all the grace he could.

It is not easy to see how Königsmarck could have

accepted this post as major-general in the Saxon army, as he undoubtedly did, consistently with the fact that he held at the same time the post of colonel in the Hanoverian army[1] and with his promise to the Princess to fly with her at the first opportunity to some far off corner of the world. But perhaps in this, too, he looked to the favour of the Elector.

Königsmarck's business having been settled, his thoughts lightly turned to pleasure, and the Court of Dresden afforded ample opportunities. Augustus the Strong did not greatly mourn his departed brother, who indeed left few to mourn him ; and after he had gratified his love of display by giving him a gorgeous funeral, he turned his attention to the ceremonies and festivities of his own coronation, and he found time to inaugurate the round of revelry, feasts, and entertainments which lasted throughout his reign. To these entertainments Königsmarck was bidden as a welcome guest, and the new major-general proved his mettle, as was meet for one so distinguished in love and war and so celebrated in his adventures. Nor was he merely a welcome guest at the table of the Elector. From the English envoy's (Stepney's) correspondence at this period it appears that he was well received in Dresden as the favoured guest of many nobles, and he himself entertained him, as he

[1] Many chroniclers have puzzled their heads to reconcile these two facts, but the question is absolutely set at rest by the despatches of Stepney, which are now published for the first time in this book. They will be quoted later, and show quite clearly that Königsmarck was major-general in the Saxon army at the same time that he was a colonel in the Hanoverian service.

"had known him in England, Hamburg, Flanders and elsewhere." True he states that he had "no great opinion of y^e^ sparke," but that was after his fall, and no one has a great opinion of the fallen.

Feasting and riotous living seem hardly fitting for a disconsolate lover such as Königsmarck avowed himself to be, whose one desire was to find some "corner of the world" where he might live with the object of his love, and forego all honour and pleasure for her dear sake. But few men are quite consistent, and Königsmarck was not among them. While the Princess was eating her heart out in the palace at Hanover, weeping and wailing, quarrelling with her husband, importuning her parents, moving Heaven and earth to advance her pet scheme, Königsmarck was revelling in the wanton halls of Augustus the Strong. It is a sad fact, but there is no denying it, for this is a true history. His conduct was far from that of an ideal lover. If he had kept to eating and drinking and high play, it would have mattered little, but unfortunately the wine-cup loosens the tongue, and the brilliant Königsmarck, known to all Europe for his wit and amours, must needs maintain his reputation at Dresden by boasting of his conquests at the Court of Hanover. Nothing interested the different Courts of Germany so much as the vices and scandals of their neighbours, and the Court of Hanover afforded a rare opportunity. Königsmarck was more than ready to gratify their curiosity about it. Countess Platen, Madame Weyke, Madame Podevils, Fräulein Schulenburg, the Elector

and the Electoral Prince all furnished matter for sundry spicy tales, Countess Platen most of all. How Countess Platen bathed in milk and then gave it away as a dole to the poor of Hanover, how she painted her face, how she domineered over the Elector, and how she made overtures to Königsmarck, offering him her daughter, and his reasons for refusing—all this and much more he babbled in his cups, and all was duly reported and exaggerated, if exaggeration were possible, to the Court of Hanover by informers at Dresden.

The rage of Countess Platen and the other ladies may be better imagined than described. Whether Königsmarck went further, as his enemies alleged, and to his lasting dishonour boasted of his intrigue with the Electoral Princess, there exists no evidence to show. From Stepney's despatches it would appear that he did not, for that worthy later mentions the Princess's name in connexion with Königsmarck with surprise. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the same charge had been brought against Königsmarck before, and he had denied it so far as the Princess was concerned, though he admitted it in the case of Countess Platen and others. His denial counts for little, for he was probably too much intoxicated to remember what he said and what he did not say. We must not judge him too harshly for his free drinking, for it was in those days the custom of Courts, and there was never a festive gathering but that the majority became more or less intoxicated. But the fact that he was a wine-bibber undoubtedly detracts from the value of his denial. Be this as it may, there is

no doubt whatever that Königsmarck's gossip at Dresden was repeated at Hanover to the people about whom he talked, and they were incensed beyond measure. This did not only apply to Countess Platen and the Elector Ernest Augustus, but to Fräulein Schulenburg and the Electoral Prince. Ermengarda Melusina Schulenburg, to her credit be it said, never mixed herself up in Court quarrels, nor sought to thrust herself upon the Electoral Princess; she was of a peaceable disposition, and this no doubt was the secret of her lasting hold on George's affections. But even Ermengarda Melusina had her foibles; she was avaricious (perhaps wisely so, for she knew that the favour of princes was fickle), and she was not without her share of vanity. To hear that her grasping propensities had been publicly derided and her charms decried at the Court of Dresden by that loose fish Königsmarck was more than she could bear, and her tears of rage and vexation made the Electoral Prince more bitter towards his wife's lover and more incensed with his wife. So altogether Königsmarck had a pretty tempest brewing against his return to Hanover.

Meantime the unhappy Princess, railing more than ever against her Hanoverian surroundings, was counting the days for her lover's return in her dull apartments in the old Leine Schloss, and seeking a pretext which would serve to carry out her scheme of separation from her husband. It was not long in coming. The sullen and silent Electoral Prince as a rule avoided meeting his consort save in public; but one day, provoked by the tears of Schulenburg and

the tales from Dresden, he burst into Sophie Dorothea's apartments without ceremony, and upbraided her coarsely for her favours to Königsmarck, telling her that she was the byword of the Saxon Court. The Princess, who hated her husband with a loathing which passes words to describe, was not slow to defend herself. Her ancient grievance against Schulenburg lent a barbed tip to her tongue, and with passion she retorted that it was not she, but her husband and his scarecrow mistress who were the laughing stock of the Courts of Europe. She went on to say that the one thing she desired was a divorce, to which the Prince retorted that he would be only too glad to grant it to her, and would enter into any plan to bring it about. Bitter recriminations followed, and the quarrel grew fiercer, until at last, goaded beyond control by some taunt levelled at his mistress, George Louis sprang at his wife, and, seizing her by the throat, threatened to strangle her. The shrieks of the Princess brought Knesebeck and other attendants rushing into the chamber, and then the Prince relaxed his hold on his half-fainting wife, and threw her from him, crying with an oath that he would never see her again. As soon as she recovered, the Princess, still smarting under this brutal insult, without asking leave of the Elector, as she ought to have done, set out for Celle immediately, announcing, to all who cared to listen, her intention of seeking her parents' protection and of never returning to Hanover. So far as her husband was concerned she declared that the breach was irreparable, as indeed it proved to be.

Travelling nearly all night, the Princess arrived at Celle early in the morning and threw herself at her astonished parents' feet. To them she told her pitiful story, pointing to the marks of violence which she bore on her body and entreating their aid and shelter. The Duchess of Celle, who loved her daughter beyond all things, took her part warmly, and declared that nothing should part them again; but the Duke, influenced by Bernstorff, refused to listen to his daughter, rebuked her for her insubordination, and bade her roughly to return to Hanover and her duty. He had no sympathy with her grievance against Schulenburg, and he bade her take as an example of wifely duty her excellent mother-in-law, the Electress Sophia, who never raised difficulties of this kind. No doubt he thought the graceless Königsmarck was at the bottom of it all. In truth, the Duke of Celle could ill afford a rupture with Hanover just then. His brother had stood by him bravely throughout the war with the Danes, which was far more his quarrel than the Elector's. The danger was not yet over, for the Danes were still threatening to invade his territory, and their demands for indemnity had reduced his exchequer to its lowest ebb. Thus there were reasons of State as well as of domestic policy for his insisting on his daughter's return, and if he could have had his way he would have packed her back to Hanover the same day. But a man, even though he be a duke and a father, is apt to reckon without his host where women are concerned, for, finding tears and prayers unavailing, Sophie Dorothea promptly

relapsed into violent hysterics. Her mother declared her quite unfit to travel, and in this opinion she was duly seconded by the Court physician, who feared the strain on the Princess's reason.

There is little doubt that Sophie Dorothea was really ill—worn out by anxiety and grief; and this, added to her husband's brutality, and her father's repulse, reduced her to a state of nervous prostration from which she took some weeks to recover. The old Duke, who really loved his daughter after his fashion, though incensed at her conduct (and it must be admitted she was a troublesome daughter), was moved by her illness and distress, and, when he had posted a despatch to Hanover he gave her leave to remain with her mother for a time, premising that she must return to Hanover and her duty as soon as she was able to travel. He could grant her this favour the more easily, as the Elector and Electress were setting out for Wiesbaden for a cure, and the Court would be away from Hanover for the time being. So Sophie Dorothea stayed on with her mother at Celle in absolute retirement, seeing no one, her health being still delicate, and when the Court moved to Brockhausen she went there too with her parents.[1] Whenever she had an opportunity she renewed her entreaties to her father to give her a separate establishment, but he sternly refused.

Smarting under her disappointment, the Princess wrote the letters to her lover, complaining bitterly

[1] Cresset's *Despatches*, Celle.

of her father's harshness, which afterwards told so heavily against her, and alienated the only powerful friend she had in the world.

The Princess went to Celle at the end of April, soon after Königsmarck's departure for Dresden ; she remained there and at Brockhausen all through May, and it was not until the middle of June that the Duke of Celle insisted on sending her back to Hanover. The Elector and Electress had now returned from Wiesbaden, and had signified their willingness to welcome back their errant daughter-in-law ; moreover, the Electoral Prince, who had incurred his share of blame for bringing about this family scandal, had gone to Berlin on a visit to his sister, the Electress of Brandenburg. It was thought advisable that he should absent himself for a time from his wife, and meanwhile the parents hoped to patch up again the outward semblance of a reconciliation between the ill-mated pair, as they had often done before. The Princess would therefore not have to face the ordeal of meeting her husband immediately on her return to Hanover, and as she was now better, the Duke of Celle insisted that she should go back, as her absence for so long a time was creating a scandal. In vain the Princess wept and prayed. The Duke, prompted by Bernstorff, bade her roughly go back to her duty. It is possible that had he temporised, or held out hope of granting her request, the catastrophe which afterwards wrecked the happiness of his daughter might have been averted. But the Duke was nothing of a diplomatist ; he was simply a headstrong old man, and unfortunately the

Princess had inherited from him a similar temperament. Thus, driven to bay, she lost her temper and threatened desperate courses. Words passed between her and her father which were never forgotten nor quite forgiven. In vain the Duchess of Celle tried to make peace, but between two such headstrong natures her words were only oil to the flames. There was nothing for the Princess to do but to return to the place she had left two months before vowing she would never see it again. This meant the triumph of the Platen faction and the public humiliation of the Princess. To her proud spirit it was worse than death.

Thus thrust from her father's gates, Sophie Dorothea set out on her return journey, her heart full of anger and revolt. A message had been sent to Celle that the Elector and Electress would be happy to receive her at Herrenhausen, where they were now staying. The road from Celle ran past the gates of Herrenhausen, which was situated about a mile from Hanover. It was expected and required by the rigid etiquette of German Courts that the Princess on her return should call and pay her respects to the head of the family (appearances must be kept up at all hazard); and, advised from Celle of the day and hour she would return, the Elector and Electress and their Court assembled to receive her with due formality. The courtiers, who knew all the circumstances of the case, were on the tiptoe of expectation to see how the Princess would demean herself. Countess Platen, more eager than the rest, and anxious to triumph over her fallen foe, craned her

head out of the window to see if the Princess were coming, just as she and her sister, Madame Weyke, had done once before, when Sophie Dorothea made her first entry into Hanover as a bride on the occasion of her ill-omened marriage. The Princess's carriage was heard approaching, the outriders were already visible, the gates of Herrenhausen were thrown open, when to every one's astonishment the Princess leant forward and, without stopping the carriage, bade the coachman drive as fast as he could past Herrenhausen into Hanover.

The astonishment of the courtiers, and the indignation of the Elector and Electress at seeing themselves thus publicly flouted, knew no bounds. One must understand the rigidity of German Court etiquette at that period to appreciate the enormity of the Princess's offence; it was not merely an act of discourtesy, but one of revolt. It is impossible not to sympathise with the spirit which dictated this act, for even if there had been no other reason, the presence of Countess Platen was sufficient to justify it.

Arrived at Hanover, the Princess went at once to her apartments in the Leine Schloss, and there, attended only by the faithful Knesebeck, who followed her mistress still, albeit with fear and trembling, she gave out that she was ill, and steadily refused to see any one. Her conduct was at once reported to Celle, and those in authority were at a loss to know what to do. The situation was one which certainly could not be maintained for long, and the excuse that the Princess made was seized upon to deceive the world

and a polite fiction was circulated to the effect that the Princess's health had broken down during the journey to Hanover, and she would shortly return and join her parents at Wienhausen. We cannot but admire the decorum with which these German princes tried to hush up their family scandals. Ill the Princess undoubtedly was, but it was an illness of the mind rather than of the body. She was sick unto death of Hanover and its surroundings, and, all the time when she was refusing to see any one, she was maturing a desperate plan of flight.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MURDER OF KONIGSMARCK

How do men die? But I, so trapped alive—
O, I shall die a dog's death, and no man's.
SWINBURNE.

A DAY or two after the Princess returned to Hanover Königsmarck came back from Dresden. He had been kept informed of her movements, and, as her affairs grew more desperate, the question of flight was freely discussed in their letters. Königsmarck at first advised the Princess to fly to France, change her religion, and throw herself on the protection of the French King. France was her mother's country, and the Duchess of Celle was known to be friendly towards France, and even suspected of leaning to Popery. The Princess, too, through Balati, the French envoy, had exchanged compliments with Louis XIV., and had distinctly favoured the French party in opposition to her husband, who always upheld William and the Alliance. In the days gone by, when the Duchess of Celle and her daughter were supposed to have some influence, they had received many valuable jewels from the French King. A change of religion would effectually exclude the

Princess from the Court of Hanover, now deeply pledged on the Protestant side, and constitute a claim on the munificence of Louis, who liberally pensioned distinguished converts, such as, for instance, the late Duke John Frederick of Hanover and King James of England. There was no reason why he should not pension the Princess as well, as she would certainly be a thorn in the side of his adversaries. Königsmarck, too, was favourably known at the Court of Versailles, and were he to enter the French service he might hope for promotion and a career with honour.

Undoubtedly there was a good deal to be said in favour of the Princess's flight to France, but there was also much against it. Such a step would cut off Sophie Dorothea irrevocably from the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg—not only from Hanover, which she ardently desired, but from Celle, which she did not desire, and from all future favours from her father. The Duke of Celle all his life long had been the stoutest opponent of France, and for his daughter to go over to his enemies would be unpardonable treason ; it would mean disinheritance without hope of reinstatement. The Princess, too, though not a deeply religious woman, was attached to the faith in which she had been brought up, and had no wish to change it, and without a change of religion there was no hope for her in France. Moreover, Elizabeth Charlotte, the Duchess d'Orleans, who was the devoted niece and correspondent of the Electress Sophia, occupied a prominent position at

the French Court. She hated the Duchess of Celle and the Electoral Princess, and would undoubtedly do everything in her power to make things unpleasant for Sophie Dorothea. Lastly, and this obstacle was insuperable, the Princess had not enough money to fly to France and to maintain herself there for any time; it was a long way, and she ran considerable risk of being overtaken. So she dismissed the French plan, and turned her thoughts to one far more practicable—flight to Wolfenbüttel.

Here the ground was well prepared. Knesebeck had a married sister in Brunswick, one Frau von Maitsch, to whom many letters were sent at this time, and who doubtless acted as an agent between the Princess and Duke Antony Ulrich. The strained relations between the Princess and the Electoral Court were well known to Antony Ulrich. She was his cousin; he had known her from childhood; she was nearly being allied to his house by the closest ties, and he was her mother's earliest friend. In this, her hour of trial, he communicated to her his sympathy and assured her of his support, more especially as he saw in these family dissensions something which might be turned to his advantage and could not fail to humiliate the Elector. The union of Hanover and Celle had been a hard blow to him, and anything which tended to disunion was in his favour.

Finding every other means of escape from a position which had become intolerable cut off, the Princess resolved to fly to Wolfenbüttel, and place herself

under the protection of her cousin and old friend. The journey was short and inexpensive, and her escape from Hanover to Wolfenbüttel would not be as irrevocable as flight to France; it would not involve a change of religion, or make an unbridgeable gulf between herself and her father, for Wolfenbüttel's quarrel was not so much with Celle as with Hanover. Once there, Duke Antony Ulrich would be sure to plead in her favour, and would certainly not give her up to the tender mercies of the Hanoverian Court. It would be better for Königsmarck too, for Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was allied with Denmark and Sweden, and Königsmarck, a Swedish subject, had only to throw in his lot with his King to be received back into favour. Of course, from the point of view of the Hanoverian government, the Princess's flight to Wolfenbüttel would be a treason even worse than flight to France, for all relations between the two Courts had long since been broken off and Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was a declared enemy of the Electoral House. Putting Königsmarck out of the question altogether, the Princess's policy was unpardonable in the eyes of the Hanoverian government: she first revolted and then plotted treason.

Unfortunately for the best interests of the Princess, Königsmarck *was* a factor in the situation. He had come back to Hanover almost simultaneously with the Princess,—an audacious act in itself, for he was in disgrace at Court on account of her. Ostensibly he had returned to attend to some necessary business;

in reality he came back for the one and only purpose of aiding the Princess in her flight to Wolfenbüttel. He still held the post of colonel in the Hanoverian Guards, and it was necessary that he should resign it formally, since he had accepted a commission in the Saxon service. But, during the few days which elapsed between his return to Hanover and July 1, he took no steps to resign his commission, nor did he show himself in public. He went straight to his house and lived there in retirement, occupying himself mainly with arranging his affairs and sorting his papers. The Princess was also in retirement in her apartments at the Palace, still insubordinate, and refusing to see any one on the plea of illness. She, too, was very busy in much the same way. Communications passed between the lovers during these few days, but they were not able to arrange a meeting. The situation was dangerous, far more so than they seemed to realise. It is true that they knew they were watched, but they hoped to evade the spies as they had often done before. But then it had been convenient for their enemies to turn a blind eye to the intrigue; now they were on the alert. Every movement was observed and reported to headquarters. Königsmarck was watched day and night, the Princess also; and had they reflected they must have seen the danger they were running. The imprudence and recklessness of their proceedings seem almost incredible; they rushed right on to their doom. As the Princess had settled on flight, it would have been wise for her to have dissembled a little; but

she and Königsmarck provoked suspicion—she by her rebellion and threats of desperate proceedings, and he by returning to Hanover. There was really no need for him to have come back at all. He could have met the Princess at Wolfenbüttel, and she could have travelled there alone almost as easily as she made the journey to Celle. But despite every warning and the dictates of common prudence, Königsmarck came back into the very hands of his enemies, who were only seeking an opportunity to destroy him.

The opportunity was not long in coming.

On the evening of Sunday, July 1, 1694, Königsmarck received a note from the Princess, written in a feigned hand,[1] asking him to come to her that night without fail, and appointing the hour and mentioning the signal. In obedience to this summons, long expected, the same night, between ten and eleven o'clock, he stole out of his house and made his way towards the Leine Schloss. It afterwards transpired that his servants noticed him leave the house; they had also observed during the day that he was restless and disturbed. But he thought he was unobserved, and, as usual on the occasions of these stolen meetings

[1] The Princess asserted later that this note was not hers at all; it was a forgery written by the Countess Platen as a snare, and she was greatly surprised when Königsmarck appeared and showed her the note. She gave it back to him saying that she had not written it. Knesebeck, on the other hand, in her statement asserts that the Princess had appointed to meet Königsmarck. It is therefore impossible to credit the poor Princess's denial, which was natural enough under the circumstances, but cannot be believed. If she had not expected Königsmarck, how came he to be admitted to her chamber at that hour of the night?

with the Princess, he adopted what was practically a disguise. He wore a pair of shabby old summer trousers, a much-worn white jacket, very short, and a brown cloak. There is a conflict of testimony as to whether he was armed or unarmed; but the burden of the evidence goes to prove that he was girt with a short sword, which was part of the ordinary equipment, but for practical purposes he was unarmed. Why should he be armed? He had had many stolen interviews with the Princess before, and had come to no hurt.

Arrived at the Leine Schloss, Königsmarck went round to the wing where the Princess's apartments were situated and gave the signal, whistling [probably] a few bars of a well-known air. The signal was replied to [probably] by a light in the window, and a minute later he was admitted through the postern by Knesebeck and conducted to the Princess's chamber. Here La Confidente withdrew and the lovers were left alone. They had not seen one another for more than three months, and now met under the shadow of great peril. We may imagine their meeting—the Princess's tearful reproaches anent her lover's conduct at Dresden, his fervent denials, and her sweet forgiveness; the tears, the vows, and the broken words. But they had other things before them than loving words and rapturous embraces; the time was short and there was much to say and much to do concerning the flight they had planned for the morrow. Both were agreed that the situation was intolerable, and could last no longer; both were ready to make

the fatal plunge and brave the consequences. There could hardly be a more favourable time than the present, so it seemed to them: the Electoral Prince was at Berlin, the Electress at Herrenhausen; there was no one of all the Hanoverian Royal Family in Hanover but the old Elector, weak and ailing, in a far off wing of the palace; time and circumstances alike were favourable for flight.

But they had forgotten one whose hatred, like her vengeance, never slumbered. Countess Platen, enraged against Königsmarck by his scandalous gossip about her at Dresden, had lost for the time the *tendresse* for him which had hitherto held her back from extreme measures. The Princess she detested and despised, and would have killed her rather than see her triumphant in Königsmarck's affections. The return of Königsmarck from Dresden, combined with the Princess's sudden revolt against all authority, made her suspicious that something unusual was going on, and for the last week she had doubled her spies, and every movement of both had been reported to her. No sooner, therefore, had Königsmarck let himself out of his house that night and stolen away disguised under cover of the darkness, than he was tracked to the palace and seen to enter the Princess's apartments. The quarry was run to earth at last. Information was at once given to Countess Platen, who in hot haste, regardless alike of the hour and place, repaired to the Elector's apartments, and told him, with much agitation and many gestures, that Königsmarck was even now in the chamber of the

Electoral Princess, and she besought him to take immediate steps to arrest and punish the offenders.

The picture of Countess Platen posing as a champion of outraged virtue might have afforded the cynical old Elector some amusement under other circumstances, but this came too near home. Though of easy morality, and by no means inclined to be hard on offences of this nature, the audacity of Königsmarck enraged him beyond measure. He was already angry with the Princess because she had flouted his authority, and he determined to make her feel the weight of it now. When he had relieved his feelings by a few round oaths, he declared his resolve of going in person to the Princess's chamber and surprising the lovers; but Countess Platen threw herself in his way and entreated him not to go. It would certainly, she pleaded, lead to disturbance, and probably result in a public scandal. The great thing was to keep an affair of this kind from being known, and if His Highness would leave the matter to her, she would find a way to arrest Königsmarck quietly, and then the Elector might punish the delinquents at his leisure, and far more effectually. The first burst of his rage being over, the easy-going Elector gave way. He hated scenes and he hated trouble, and so he agreed to shift the disagreeable task upon the Countess, who was only too ready to undertake it. At her suggestion he signed a warrant to the Commandant of the palace guard, authorising him to give the Countess Platen four halberdiers, who were to accompany her and obey her in all things without question. That

the Elector had nothing more in his mind than the arrest of Königsmarck is evident from the fact that he said to the Countess, with a touch of malice, he was sure his Colonel of the Guards was safe in her hands, as he was so good-looking.

Armed with the Elector's sign-manual, the Countess went down to the guard-room and obtained four trusty halberdiers. After she had given them drink and sworn them to secrecy, she led the way through the dark corridors of the great rambling palace to the wing occupied by the Electoral Princess.

The Leine Schloss, or Royal Palace of Hanover, has been considerably altered since that fatal night; but the walls are still standing, and it is easy, even now, to follow the original plan of the castle. The Electoral Princess occupied a suite of rooms overlooking the River Leine, then spanned by a drawbridge, now by a permanent way. A wide corridor ran from her apartments, which still remains. This corridor touches at one end a magnificent hall, known as the Rittersaal, or Knights' Hall, and there was also a vestibule, or inner hall, hard by.

By the door of the Rittersaal the Countess paused, and peered down the long corridor leading to the Princess's apartments. There was no sound to be heard, but a faint glimmer of light beneath the door showed her that the Princess was still astir. The thought that Königsmarck was at this moment in her hated rival's arms excited Countess Platen beyond control. She turned to the four desperadoes, and ordered them to lie in ambush and await her signal, and then rush

out and take the first man who passed, at all hazards, dead or alive. The halberdiers concealed themselves under the shadow of the huge projecting chimneypiece of the Rittersaal.[1] The Countess withdrew to the vestibule hard by, and there waited for her prey.

She had some time to wait, for the lovers, unconscious of danger, had so much to say that the hours flew by unheeded, and still they were absorbed in one another. They discussed every detail of the escape on the morrow, and re-discussed every precaution against discovery. They would have talked till dawn had not Eléonore Knesebeck interrupted them and called attention to the fact that it was high time to put an end to the conversation. Still the lovers, perchance with a presentiment of the coming peril, were loth to part, until at length Knesebeck almost forced Königsmarck out of the chamber. With a last fond embrace he bade the Princess farewell until the morrow, bidding her be of good courage, for the hour was at hand when they would part no more. Of a truth it was their last parting.

La Confidente conducted Königsmarck to the outer door of the Princess's apartments, and there left him. There was no light, but he knew his way so well that he could find it in the dark, so he walked softly down the long corridor, humming a tune under his

[1] I visited the scene of the murder in 1898. This chimneypiece still remains, elaborately carved and wrought, a splendid monument of masonry. The Rittersaal, too, has little changed, except that it was re-decorated in the early part of this century. The long corridor has been laid down with parquet, but the attendants show the spot where the murder was committed.

breath. It was characteristic of the man and his careless, dare-devil spirit that he treated the affair so lightly. He was embarked on a venture which would revolutionise his whole future life, which would set every Court in Europe by the ears, and involved the happiness of the woman he loved; yet it all weighed so lightly with him that he left her humming a tune. Yet elopement with an Electoral Princess was a somewhat serious undertaking even in those days.

A few steps brought Königsmarck to the door in the left-hand corner of the corridor by which he had been admitted, opposite the Rittersaal. The door had purposely been left unbarred for his exit; it was now locked. The tune died on his lips, and he turned to retrace his steps. At that moment the four desperadoes sprang from their hiding-place and rushed upon him with their weapons. The unfortunate man realised that he was caught in a trap; but, though taken by surprise and comparatively unarmed, he defended himself doughtily. For a few minutes there was a fierce conflict, during which two of his adversaries were wounded, and though Königsmarck was fighting in the dark against four armed men, the result seemed uncertain until his sword snapped in twain. This placed him at the mercy of his assailants, and he fell, severely wounded in the head by a cut from a battle-axe, and run through the body by a sword. Even as he fell his cry was, "Spare the Princess! Spare the innocent Princess!" and then he swooned.

The men bound and dragged him, all bleeding

as he was, into the vestibule, where Countess Platen awaited her victim. By the light of a feeble candle she bent over him and peered fearfully into his face. Things were worse than she had bargained for, and at first it seemed that he was already dead. But no ; he opened his eyes. At the sight of his enemy's malignant face Königsmarck realised that he was a victim of her hate, and he rallied all his ebbing strength to curse her bitterly for the foul thing she was. His lips were shut by the foot of his murderess, who, pretending to slip on his blood, trod by design upon his mouth. Too weak to resent the outrage, Königsmarck swooned once more. He recovered consciousness again, only to protest with feeble tongue and broken words the innocence of the Princess. Then his head fell back, and he died with her name on his lips.

At first Countess Platen refused to believe that he was dead, and made every effort to restore him to life, pouring cordial down his throat, rubbing his hands, and binding up his wounds ; but when she saw it was too late her anxiety gave place to terror and perhaps to remorse. She cherished a sort of tigress's passion for the murdered man, though she would rather see him dead at her feet, as he now was, than in the arms of her rival. When she gave the word to take him, dead or alive, she hardly contemplated so literal an obedience to her orders, and she bitterly upbraided the soldiers for their blunder and excess of zeal. The assassins were no less frightened than the Countess, when they realised that the

THE MURDER OF KÖNIGSMARCK. [*To face p.* 512.

From an Old Print.

murdered man was none other than the popular Count Königsmarck. The Countess did not fail to take advantage of their consternation by declaring that the Elector would of a surety hang the lot of them, if they did not swear the Count's death was due wholly to his own desperate resistance. This they at once vowed, and declared that in the darkness they could not see what they were doing; they acted only on the defensive, and he rushed blindly upon their weapons. The Countess rehearsed them carefully in this story, and made them promise to testify the same, separately and collectively, to the Elector.

The Countess then repaired to the Elector's apartments, and with many tears and much trepidation told him of the fatal mishap, which she ascribed wholly to Königsmarck's recklessness. The Elector was aghast at what had occurred and greatly enraged at the way the Countess had abused his authority. He would have punished Königsmarck for his presumption by arrest and ignominious dismissal from the Hanoverian service, but he never contemplated his murder. Cruelty and assassination were not among the vices of Ernest Augustus, and throughout his reign no deed of violence could be laid to his charge. Moreover, he foresaw that by this wicked crime the very thing he had most desired to avoid—publicity—would be brought about, very painful family scandal would be dragged before the world, and he could not hope to escape the odium which was sure to accrue. Königsmarck was known throughout Europe; he had many powerful friends at the Courts of Saxony,

Sweden, and Denmark, possibly England and France too : some of these would certainly raise a storm when they heard of the foul manner of his death. Ernest Augustus in his old age did not care to burden his conscience with a crime which would only bring harm to him, and disrepute to his house. In fact, it was worse than a crime ; it was a stupid blunder, which when known would involve the Electoral Court in no end of difficulties. So the old Elector stormed and raged at his favourite, cursing her in no measured terms, and vowing he would never forgive her. She was astounded at his fury. Never in all the long years of her ascendancy had she seen him like this, and, indeed, her influence over him was never the same after that night. It was with much difficulty that she contrived to bring the Elector to something like reason. She pointed out the uselessness of mere denunciations, bringing to bear the unanswerable argument that the man was dead and nothing could call him back to life.

Meanwhile the hours were slipping by and some action must be taken unless Königsmarck's body were to be left in the vestibule all night and discovered in the morning. Countess Platen pointed out that the evil consequences the Elector dreaded were dependent upon the Count's death being known, and they might all be avoided if it were concealed. Why should it not be concealed? No one had seen him enter the palace except her trusted spies, and no one had seen him inside its walls except herself, the halberdiers, the Princess, and Knesebeck. For herself and the soldiers

she could answer, and there was an easy way of stopping the mouths of the Princess and her waiting-woman.

The Elector listened, ever ready to avoid a difficulty, and presently intimated that, since she had got him into the mess, she must get him out of it. This the Countess expressed herself as ready and able to do. The Elector then reluctantly accompanied her to the room where the murdered man still lay, guarded by his assassins. These men[1] were sworn, under penalty of death, not to disclose a word of their night's work. Königsmarck's pockets were searched and the contents handed over to the Elector. Then the corpse was dragged to a hole, or *treppe*, hard by, thrust down, covered with quicklime, and the place walled up. The blood-stains were carefully washed from the floor, and every trace of the murder was obliterated. The men must have worked very quickly and expeditiously. No one in the sleeping palace was aroused, and everything was completed before the morning light, which, at that time of the year in Hanover, began to dawn soon after three o'clock.

[1] Of these halberdiers little is known. One was named Bushmann, and is said to have made a confession on his death-bed to a priest named Cramer of his part in the murder. He is said to have been so badly wounded in the struggle by Königsmarck that he could do nothing for six weeks, but the authority for this statement is doubtful. Local tradition gives the name of another of these men as Luders, who, from the date of the crime, became the owner of an estate given him by the Hanoverian government. His descendants until recently lived at Hanover, and may be living there still for aught I know, and are well-to-do people. Some information of both these men is given in Cramer's *Aurora Königsmarck*.

Thus perished miserably, with his body given the sepulture of a dog, Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck, the head of a noble and famous family, and one of the most brilliant adventurers who strutted across the stage of Europe in the seventeenth century. It may truly be said of him that nothing in his life became him so well as the way he quitted it. He died bravely, fighting against overwhelming odds, and he died gallantly, defending with his last breath the honour of the woman he loved. That he loved the Princess, as far as it was in his nature to love any one, must be admitted; it was not the highest kind of love, but a passion selfish in its essence, to which men of his kind are prone, very fierce while it lasted and very real, but probably not enduring. He made great sacrifices for her sake, refused honour, promotion, fame, all that men hold dear; so he must have loved her after his fashion. That he was unworthy of the love she gave back to him fourfold must be admitted also; he was utterly unworthy. Yet to judge him fairly we must judge him by the standards of his time. These standards were not high ones. He lived in an age of profligacy and in Courts where laxity of manners and morals were the order of the day, and he was lax and profligate accordingly. But if he were no better he was no worse than his compeers, and certainly does not deserve the censure which has been heaped upon him; for, surrounded as he was by parasites and flatterers, the marvel is not that he was so bad, but that he was as good as he was. The worst

part of his conduct was his intrigue with Countess Platen—conduct impossible to palliate or excuse, and which brought its own punishment. Otherwise he had his own rough standard of honour, and as far as we can see he acted up to his lights, which certainly were not bright ones. He was a brave soldier, fearless in the field; he was open-handed, generous to a fault, and those who knew him best were greatly attached to him. His sisters loved him, his servants were devoted to him, and these things speak in his favour. Of him it may be said his vices were those of his era, his virtues were all his own. He did wrong, let us admit it, but he paid the penalty with his blood.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RUIN OF THE PRINCESS

What if my life be all undone,
And all things false below the sun,
Yet still I have been true to one—
Most passionately true!

LADY ARABELLA ROMILLY.

AFTER Königsmarck had left, the Princess passed most of the night in packing up her jewels, sorting and burning papers, and completing arrangements for her flight. It was arranged that, on receipt of a note from Königsmarck in the morning, the Princess and her lady-in-waiting should steal disguised to some quiet spot in the city, and thence escape in his coach, which, it afterwards transpired, was under orders to start for Dresden at a moment's notice. Outside Hanover the order would have been reversed; the coachman would have been told to drive with all speed to Wolfenbüttel, and once across the Hanoverian frontier the fugitives would have been safe from pursuit.

During the night Knesebeck fancied that she heard sounds, but thought nothing of them. Königsmarck had promised to send the Princess word early in the morning, but when the day wore on and nothing

came she grew anxious, and her anxiety increased when she learnt that he had not returned home and his servants knew nothing of his whereabouts. His absence did not trouble his servants, as the Count was given to nocturnal adventures and often remained away for days together. But it troubled the Princess greatly, and she began to fear that some evil had befallen him. Presently some one came into the antechamber with the rumour that Königsmarck had fought a duel with Count Lippe, and had been run through the body. Greatly alarmed, the Princess sent to Marshal Podevils to find out if the report were true, but the Marshal said that it was groundless and Königsmarck was doubtless safe and well. Later, when the Princess attempted to go out, she was informed that it was the Elector's pleasure she should not leave her apartments, and no reply was vouchsafed to her remonstrance. Her children were in the habit of coming to see her daily at a certain hour, but this day they came not, and when she requested their presence she was told that the Elector had given orders they were not to be admitted, and the young Prince George Augustus was dining with the Elector alone.

By this time the Princess had no doubt that she was betrayed, and gave herself up to a passionate agony of grief; while Knesebeck, though greatly frightened also, vainly endeavoured to comfort her. Great though the Princess's fear was, and great though her peril, she gave little thought to her own danger; all her anxiety was for Königsmarck's safety. She was

in the same plight as she had written to him long ago: "I fear that we are betrayed. I am trembling on the edge of a precipice, but my own danger is the least of my anxieties. I scarcely think of the misfortunes inevitable and unavoidable if we are discovered: you, only, occupy my thoughts."[1] Then her terrors were imaginary; now they were real. At the very moment of fruition all her hopes were dashed to the ground, and she saw before her nothing but ruin and lifelong misery. To all her frenzied inquiries (and it was no use sending Knesebeck for further information, as that lady had now been ordered not to quit the Princess's chamber) she could elicit no reply; and the fact that she was a prisoner in her apartments made her fear the worst. She passed the night in a torment of anxiety.

Meantime the inquiries which Knesebeck had started set Königsmarck's servants on the same track, and all sorts of rumours flew around Hanover. It was reported that the previous night Königsmarck, surrounded by a bright light, had been seen in the palace through the windows, and a crowd assembled outside the gates, to the manifest discomfort of the Elector, who gave orders for them to be dispersed. So passed Monday. The next day, Tuesday, July 3, Hildebrand, Königsmarck's secretary, went to Marshal Podevils to get information, if possible, of his master's fate, as there was now a report that he was imprisoned in the palace. Podevils, who had always been a good friend of the Königsmarck family, and who

[1] *Vide* vol. i., p 274-5.

must have suspected that there was foul play, nevertheless stood loyally by his master, the Elector, and said : " The Count will be found somewhere. There is no use making a fuss. Tell the servants to keep quiet."

Up till now no rumour had reached Celle of the catastrophe, for we find the English envoy, Cresset, writing on this date : " The Electoral Prince is amusing himself in Berlin, and the Electoral Princess is always ill at Hanover." [1]

The following day Hildebrand received a strong hint to keep quiet, but nevertheless he dispatched a trusty servant to Dresden to tell the Elector of Saxony of his master's disappearance. Hardly had he done so than the Elector of Hanover sent three officials to search Königsmarck's rooms thoroughly, and particularly his writing-table. Several papers were seized, and the rooms and their contents were sealed up with the official seal. The next day Hildebrand wrote a guarded letter to Königsmarck's sisters at Hamburg to tell them that their brother was missing, and asking for directions as to what he was to do with his effects. He added that he believed the Count was still alive, and asked them to wait eight days before demanding his restoration ; but so frightened was he, lest the Hanoverian authorities might intercept this letter, that he did not mention that the Count's rooms had been searched and his papers seized.

These same papers sealed the doom of the Princess.

[1] Cresset's *Despatch*, Celle, July 3, 1694.

They were taken to the Elector, who went through them carefully with the Platens. They were found to include many letters from Sophie Dorothea to her lover from the beginning of the year, and especially during his absence at Dresden, detailing minutely the story of her wrongs. They showed evidence of an extended secret correspondence, but the letters before January were missing. (They had passed into the hands of Aurora, and were in her keeping; they are the letters published in this book.) But though these could not be found, there remained more than enough to reveal everything. The cypher was easily made out, and though some of the Princess's letters were written in a disguised hand, and some transcribed by Knesebeck, this did not conceal anything, but only served to implicate the lady-in-waiting in the intrigue, The letters contained convincing proofs of the Princess's passion for Königsmarck and of her hatred of her husband and the House of Hanover. They contained, too, many severe reflections on her father's harshness, especially when he refused to grant her a separate maintenance,—words written in the heat of anger, and perhaps forgotten as soon as written, but the writing remained. They afforded, also, full evidence of her projected flight to Wolfenbüttel, in which Frau von Maitsch and Knesebeck were implicated—an act of treason in itself. The old Elector was incensed at these revelations; and though he might have overlooked the intimacy with Königsmarck, for he was not hard on such weaknesses, he could not forgive the intrigue with his arch-enemy of Wolfenbüttel. This

prejudiced him hopelessly against the Princess, and made him harden his heart against any thought of mercy. It was clear that not only the honour, but the safety of his House demanded that the Princess should be kept in durance vile.

The Electress Sophia, who had now been informed of the course of events, had no word strong enough to express her condemnation of the offender. She at last saw a chance of ridding herself for ever of the daughter of the d'Olbreuse, and she hailed it gladly. There was no mercy in the heart of the Electress for her erring daughter-in-law, nor would she hearken to any plea of extenuating circumstances. Yet if she had reflected she might have seen that it was she who had helped to drive the unhappy woman to these desperate steps. A little kindness, a little forbearance, a word of advice at the right season might have saved Sophie Dorothea: but no help ever came from the Electress Sophia.

Meantime the Princess, half-crazed with fear and suspense, implored to see the Elector and to know whereof she was accused; but no answer was returned to her prayers. She wrote long letters to her parents at Celle, complaining bitterly of the indignities to which she was subjected, and begging them to come to her succour. But at Celle she had been forestalled by Count Platen, who, on the discovery of the secret correspondence, posted off to Duke George William under orders of the Elector. Count Platen laid bare to the Duke the whole miserable story, and last, but not least, told him of the Princess's aspersions

upon her father. He showed him the Princess's own letters to Königsmarck, especially those which animadverted on her father's meanness and cruelty in refusing her shelter from her enemies at Hanover.

The Duke of Celle was wounded to the quick when he read these letters, and enraged beyond measure; his pride was hurt, too, by the dishonour done to his House. His standard of morality was not a high one, but he held that princesses of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg should be above reproach, as in the case of his own wife and the Electress Sophia. The Electoral Prince's many infidelities formed to him no excuse for his wife going astray. He argued that however immoral a man might be, he could not possibly introduce spurious offspring into the family, or affect the legitimacy of the succession. The old Duke prided himself on being a blunt, straightforward man, and he had a horror of intrigue and double-dealing. From every point of view it seemed to him that his daughter's conduct was as bad as it could be—a view in which Platen did not hesitate to back him up.

With the Duchess of Celle it was different. However culpable she might deem her daughter to be, she would not forsake her in her desperate straits, for she believed that the Prince was far more culpable than she. The Duchess, too, refused to believe, however imprudent her daughter might have been, that she was actually guilty with Königsmarck. She reminded the Duke of how alone and unprotected his daughter was, how surrounded by enemies, whose cruelty had

goaded her to these desperate steps. She urged that her harsh expressions about her father were written when she was beside herself, and therefore allowance was to be made for them. Then, seeing he was still obdurate, she threw herself at his feet, and with tears and prayers besought him not to desert his only child in her hour of trouble. But the Duke would hear no reason. His wife had long since lost her influence over him, and he cursed her, and her daughter, and the day when he first brought her to his house, and drove her from him with bitter words. The Duchess next went to Bernstorff, who had ever shown himself her enemy, and besought his aid in this terrible crisis, offering him a large sum of money if he would work for the interests of the Princess and do what he could to mitigate the Duke's anger against her.

Bernstorff, already in the pay of Hanover, double traitor that he was, did not reject the proffered bribe, and hypocritically promised the Duchess that he would use his best exertions. It must have been a triumph to his mean soul to see this proud and imperious woman humbling herself before him as a suppliant. He knew well her day was over, that the sun of her power had set for ever: the ruin of the daughter meant also, comparatively speaking, the ruin of the mother. The Duchess Eléonore had indeed to drink the cup of humiliation to the dregs. For years she had planned and laboured until she had reached the summit of her ambition, and now she was hurled from it by the cruellest blow that Fate could have dealt her. Yet her mother's heart beat true. She had no

reproaches for her erring daughter, only love; and, bitter though her fall was, it was not half so bitter as her impotence to help.

Though the Duchess could do little, she did not cease to importune every one concerned—the Duke, Bernstorff, and Platen—that the Princess should be treated with leniency; and especially she pleaded against harsh and hasty judgment. Had it not been for those unlucky letters she might have succeeded, for the Duke's anger was not wont to be long-lived; but unfortunately they remained, and bore damning evidence against the unhappy Princess. Count Platen's mission to the Court of Celle was first to prejudice the Duke against his daughter and then to take counsel with him as to what should be done. There were grave issues at stake, and it was important that whatever steps were taken should be taken in concert between the two Courts. Things had come to a desperate pass; but it was resolved not to abandon all efforts to bring about, not a reconciliation, for that was impossible, but an arrangement which might obviate the necessity of public scandal.

This task was very difficult, and was rendered more so by the irreconcilable attitude of the Princess. She was still ignorant of Königsmarck's fate, but she refused positively to remain at Hanover of her own free will. To keep her there as a prisoner would give occasion for the enemy to blaspheme, and the Courts of Hanover and Celle were anxious above all things to keep the real facts

of the case from leaking out. Both Courts resolved that Königsmarck's name should not be even mentioned in connexion with the Princess, and that any course agreed upon should be carried out as though the Count had never existed. Pending further negotiations, it was resolved to remove the Princess to her father's territory—not to the castle of Celle, for that would look as though he condoned her conduct and bring her and her mother together—but to Ahlden, a lonely magistrate's house in a distant village, some twenty miles from Hanover and Celle respectively, where she would be effectually cut off from intercourse with the world. It was determined, if possible, to give this removal the appearance of voluntary flight; and the imprisonment of Knesebeck was also decided upon.

While Count Platen was at Celle the Princess had addressed another letter to the Elector, who had always hitherto been inclined to treat her with indulgence, asking for an interview with him, and for permission to be allowed to retire to the territory of Celle. The Elector merely acknowledged the letter, saying the matter was under consideration.

The return of Count Platen to Hanover, bringing the news of how utterly Duke George William condemned his daughter's conduct, deprived the unhappy woman of her last chance of protection; her own father had turned against her, and there was now no longer any need to treat her with consideration, or even with respect. Knesebeck was arrested forthwith, and without any explanation was hurried off to prison. Then the Princess knew that she must expect the worst.

As Count Platen had seen the Duke of Celle, he was deemed the fit and proper person, despite the infamous conduct of his wife, to interview the Princess, and conduct the difficult and delicate negotiations necessary to bring her to reason. Armed therefore with the Elector's authority, he went to the Princess's apartments, entrusted with full power to deal with her as need required. The Princess had now been shut up in her rooms for nearly a fortnight under strict surveillance, without any explanation having been vouchsafed, though she had guessed the reason but too well.

Platen went expecting to find her humble and contrite; instead he found her angry and defiant, and most indignant that he of all people should have been sent to her: she did not forget that she was still the Electoral Princess and the heiress of Celle, and her first question was why the Elector had not come to see her himself. Platen replied that His Highness bade him say that he declined to have any further communication with her, and had sent him to communicate to the Princess the fact that she would no longer be permitted to remain at the Court of Hanover. To this the Princess replied that she desired nothing better than to go away from it for ever; it had been her wish for a long time past. But she demanded the reason of her unjustifiable detention. Platen retorted that her detention was not unjustifiable; it was in accordance with the orders of her father as well as of the Elector, and she had brought it upon herself by her misconduct. The

Princess haughtily asked him to what he referred, and he replied, *tout court*, to her criminal intimacy with Königsmarck; and by way of thrusting the insult home, added that her imprisonment was likely to be prolonged as it was suspected that she was pregnant by Königsmarck. The Princess's anger blazed forth at this coarse insult, and she asked Platen if he mistook her for his shameless wife. Platen rejoined that it was useless for the Princess to equivocate or to deny: everything was discovered and known; they had possession of her letters, and her lover had met with his deserts. The Princess's face blanched, and she exclaimed, "Where is Königsmarck?" Platen answered that the Count was discovered leaving her chamber on the night of July 1, and had been killed in resisting his arrest.

This cruel blow completely shattered the Princess's self-control; her agony and despair were piteous to behold. The thought of Königsmarck's murder swallowed up all else, and, lost to the sense of her own peril, she burst into weeping and lamentations, praying God to take her, since he was dead, and vowing she would live no longer. Platen looked on unmoved, and noted down all these cries as so many proofs of her guilt. The Princess, beside herself with grief, denounced him in the most passionate terms, and not him only, but the Elector and all the House of Hanover as murderers and assassins; she refused to parley with Platen longer, and bade him begone from her presence. He left, not without giving orders for the Princess to be watched closely, as she threatened

to kill herself. He reported all that had passed to the Elector, saying that the Princess was very violent, and impenitent, and more insubordinate than ever.

It is quite possible that the Princess would have committed suicide if she had possessed the means of doing so, for now, deprived of every friend and help on earth, she abandoned herself to despair. Beside the fact that Königsmarck was dead all else was nothing. She no longer cared for her safety or heeded her interests; life had nothing left for her. As she wrote to him long ago: "My life is bound up with yours. I would not live a moment if you were to be killed." And again: "Without you life would be intolerable, and imprisonment within four walls preferable than to go on living in the world."[1] The thought that her lover had been foully murdered coming from her chamber that night, with her kisses still warm on his lips, drove her nearly mad, and to her excited imagination his blood seemed to be on her head. Her horror and loathing of his assassins, among whom she included the Electoral family of Hanover as well as the Platens, knew no bounds; compromise with them was impossible, and her one desire was to quit this hated palace and find some quiet spot where she might die. To this frame of mind—absolute recklessness of the future and indifference to her own interests—must be attributed much of the subsequent attitude of the Princess, an attitude her enemies were not slow to take advantage of to work for her hurt.

[1] *Vide* correspondence, vol. i., pp. 308-309.

The Princess's defiance was reported to Celle, and reconciliation was seen to be absolutely impossible or even an amicable settlement. Something would have to be done forthwith, and it was resolved that steps should be taken to procure a separation, on the ground of the Princess's wilful desertion of her husband and refusal to submit herself to her consort's connubial rights; the more drastic measure of divorce was not yet hinted at. The first thing was to remove the Princess from Hanover, and communications passed daily between the two Courts as to when the Princess should be sent to Ahlden and the best means of twisting events so that the Königsmarck affair might be kept in the background, and colour given to the theory of wilful desertion.

In accordance with this policy extraordinary care was then, and afterwards, taken to destroy or suppress any documents containing mention of Königsmarck's name. But though no reference to Königsmarck can be found in the manuscripts preserved in the Hanoverian Archives, they contain several interesting papers which have reference to the Princess's case, and among them may be found a despatch bearing on this particular crisis, a despatch of Platen to Bernstorff, dated July 13, 1694.

In it Platen replies to a letter from Bernstorff, and says that he gathers from it the Princess may set out for Ahlden on July 15. The Princess will hear this "with great satisfaction, as she is much annoyed that the journey cannot be undertaken on the 14th, so anxious is she to leave Hanover." After discussing the journey, retinue, and luggage, he goes on: "As

to the proposition of suggesting through Monsieur Busche to Madame la Princesse that she may declare, in order to save appearances, that she will not, and cannot, live with the Prince, and therefore has begged leave to retire before his return here, we consider it desirable to spread such a rumour abroad, but not to suggest to the Princess that she should say it. We will speak to Her Highness to-morrow on the matter and see what her resolve is."

On July 15 Platen again writes to Bernstorff saying that he will put his letter of the 14th before the Elector, and does not doubt that he will fall in with all Bernstorff's proposals with regard to the journey to Ahlden. Further on is it again stated: "She [the Princess] is extremely anxious to leave this place, so much so that she receives the news that her journey must still be delayed a couple of days with great impatience." And finally: "The departure of Madame la Princesse Electorale cannot possibly pass for desertion, as she wishes to take all her belongings and attendants with her."

It is evident from these letters that the Courts of Hanover and Celle were anxious to save appearances, even to the extent of circulating a false report as to the Princess's flight.

On July 17 the journey was, so to speak, put upon the stage, and the Princess quitted Hanover for ever. On arrival at Ahlden she found herself a State prisoner.

Despite all these elaborate precautions, the truth was beginning to leak out. Every Court in Europe

was talking, and, notwithstanding persistent denials, the imprisonment of the Princess and the disappearance of Königsmarck were coupled together. Louis XIV. asked the Duchess d'Orleans at supper whether it was true that Königsmarck was imprisoned in a cellar of the castle at Hanover. Stepney writes from Dresden :

"We have whisperings as if one of Count Königsmarck's servants was come hither Post from Hanover to tell y^e^ Elector, His Master has been missing ever since the 30th of last month, the day he designed to leave Hanover and come hither, where he has been made lately Major Generall, to cleare a debt of $\frac{m}{30}$ Dollars which He won of y^e^ Elector when he made y^e^ campaign two years ago with you in Flanders. If it be true that y^e^ Count is not to be found, 'tis an even lay that they have used him little better than his Brother did Esquire Thinn, and perhaps a great Lady likewise (with whom he is suspected to have been familiar) may have been some cause of his misfortune. All I can say of y^e^ matter, the Electorall Prince of Hanover is at Berlin, acting Comedyies, and making merry with his sister y^e^ Electrice."[1]

In Hanover, too, the wildest rumours flew about, and in Celle, where the Princess was very popular, there was a great feeling of indignation at the way she was being treated. All this was very unpleasant to the ducal brothers, and feeling that some explanation

[1] Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden *Despatch*, July $\frac{10}{20}$, 1694.

was advisable, they drafted a circular letter to their representatives abroad "as a declaration for foreign wherever delicate points occur."

"The Princess at first," so runs the document, "displayed only some coldness towards her husband, but Fräulein von Knesebeck by degrees inspired her with such dislike to him that she begged from her father permission to return to her parents' home. Her father was displeased, and warned the Princess to place confidence in her husband. After that she paid her father a visit as Brockhausen; but when he learnt that the Prince was intending to make a journey to Berlin to see his sister, he sent his daughter back to Hanover with further admonitions that she should speak with her husband before his departure. But her dislike of her husband was so intensified by the machinations of Fräulein von Knesebeck that she determined not to await his return from Berlin. As soon as his arrival was imminent, she withdrew again from Hanover to her father. He, however, sent messengers to meet her on the way to forbid her coming to Celle, and insisted on her either returning, or withdrawing for the present to the magistrate's house at Ahlden, which lay on the way. The Princess chose the latter course; but her corrupter, Fräulein von Knesebeck, was arrested at the wish of the Duke George William."

This circular was duly dispatched to the Brunswick-Lüneburg envoys at the different Courts. The very fact of speaking of Ahlden as if it lay on the road between Hanover and Celle, when it was twenty miles

away from either of them in an opposite direction, shows that this report relied on the ignorance of foreign Courts to conceal the actual circumstances. If we compare Count Platen's two letters already quoted with this circular, it is clear the whole policy of those in authority at this time was to mislead. There is no mention of Königsmarck's name, no more than if he had never existed. Knesebeck is made the scapegoat, and her conduct is distorted to veil the Princess's errors.

We must now leave the Princess for a space and return to the fate of her lover.

Though this circular to the foreign Courts might explain the Princess's captivity, it shed no light whatever on Königsmarck's disappearance, with which they were much more concerned. The Hanoverian government at this time were verily at their wits' end to meet the inquiries which beset them on every side, and the truth that murder will out was being proved once more. The Count's sisters were most untiring in their efforts to discover their missing brother. Acting on the secretary's advice, the Countess Aurora and the Countess Lewenhaupt, then at Hamburg, waited twelve days after receiving his letter, before taking any steps, in the hope that their brother might turn up. Then they wrote to the Elector of Hanover for information, saying that they were credibly informed he was imprisoned in the Elector's palace. To this letter, as to all others, from whatever quarter, the Elector replied, saying that he had no knowledge of Königsmarck's

whereabouts, nor was he in any way responsible for him. On receiving this unsatisfactory reply Aurora set out for Hanover and proceeded to prosecute a vigorous search. At Hanover she was simply ordered to leave, and given a time to quit the town.[1] She then went to Celle, where Bernstorff told her that her importunate demands would only have the effect, in case her brother was in the hands of the Hanoverian government, of making them refuse to give him up[2]; so after remaining some time at Celle without any result, she set out for Dresden to implore the aid of the Elector of Saxony.

Before the arrival of Aurora the Elector of Saxony had already instituted a search for the vanished man. On receipt of a letter from Hildebrand he sent Bannier to Hanover on July 13 to demand the instant restitution of Königsmarck, on the ground that he was major-general in a cavalry regiment of the Saxon army, under orders to join the active forces on the Rhine. Aghast at this peremptory message from his brother of Saxony, the Elector Ernest Augustus shuffled and said that he had no wish to detain the Count, and did not hold him in his power. Bannier rejoined that Königsmarck had disappeared, and it was the duty of the Elector to institute a search for him. The answer was that His Serene Highness, "in personal remembrance

[1] *The Magazine of the Historical Association for Lower Saxony*, 1879, page 65.

[2] Communication of Bernstorff at the Conference of Engesen, August 5, 1694.

of the high services as colonel rendered by the vanished man, would not have failed to institute such an inquiry, but the fact had been elicited from the Count's own servants that he had often gone away at night without leaving any message, and remained away for days at a time, and so there was no ground for instituting inquiries." Bannier then pertinently asked why the Count's belongings had been sealed and his papers seized. This was met by the statement that when an officer in the Hanoverian service died it was customary to subtract his official papers; and stress was laid on the fact that the Count was still in the Hanoverian army when he vanished, and therefore the Elector, though willing to do all in his power, could not rightly be expected to hand the man over if he were found.[1] But, however much the Hanoverian ministers might evade or deny, it was firmly believed at Dresden that Königsmarck's disappearance was connected with the Princess. Something of this may be gathered from the following letter, which Stepney wrote at this time to Cresset, the English envoy at Hanover:

"I have great curiositie to know what piece of mischief has been brewing at Hannover. If you dare not trust it at length, I must beg you to satisfy me in Cypher, as likewise with y^e^ particulars of your Princess's ruine. Amours are fatall in these parts; wee have had a scene of them here, and may hereafter have more y^e^ like nature. But at present y^e^ Tragedy is removed to y^r^ Courts, and I fear Daggers and

[1] *Vide* Article in *Magazine for Lower Saxony*, 1879.

poyson will be as familiar among you as they are in Italy. Y^r^ Princes have been often there, and may have learned y^e^ humour of y^e^ country of despatching people without Noise. A servant or two of Count Königsmarck run frequently betwixt this place and Hannover, (as I have heard Count Berlo's dog did betwixt y^e^ Camp and Brusses after y^e^ Battle of Fleuros,) seeking out their master, but have no tidings: our Elector sent one of his Adjutants, Mr Bannier (a Swede likewise) to Hannover, I believe with a design to stopp y^e^ blow if it was not yet given. But I suppose the Corps by this time is in y^e^ common shore, and our Elector by y^e^ accident has cleared y^e^ debt $\frac{m}{30}$ R he had lost to him two years ago at play. I have been told his sister raves like Cassandra, and will know what is become of her brother; but at Hannover they answer, like Cain, that they are not her brother's keeper, and that y^e^ Body should be found (which I believe as little as y^t^ of Moses), yet y^e^ circumstances of y^e^ Murder will be left as much in y^e^ dark as y^e^ manner of despatching Sir Edmonbury Godfrey has been. He was not recommended to be by Mr Stratford; I knew him in England, at Hamburg, in Flanders and at Hannover for a dissolute debauche whom I would always have avoided. By chance I ate with him here at Count Frizews and our new privy counsellor Haxthausen, and by chance likewise they did suppe with me, whereas they were invited to Mr Bomenburgh's who too late remembered it was a fish-night and so shifted off his own company on me. This is all I have had to do with y^e^ spark,

and if he has been so black as we think he is, his Fate (be what it will) is not to be pityed." [1]

To modify the somewhat cavalier treatment of Bannier at Hanover a statement was drawn up by the Hanoverian government and Count Witgenstein was dispatched to Dresden as an envoy extraordinary to explain matters personally. Witgenstein was well received by the Elector of Saxony, and the matter would probably have blown over without further noise had it not been for the arrival at Dresden of the Countess Aurora. This young lady, who possessed considerable personal attractions, and was already favourably known to the Elector, threw herself at his feet, and, repeating all that she had gleaned of her brother's disappearance at Hanover and Celle, besought his powerful aid and protection. Augustus the Strong could never refuse the prayer of a beautiful woman. He assured Aurora that he would do everything in his power to discover the missing man, and force the Elector of Hanover, if need be at the point of the sword, to give him up. Stepney writes again :

" Connigsmark's sister is come hither under pretence of getting y^e^ Elector to interest himself more warmly than he has done hitherto with the Dukes of Brunswick-Luneburg about her brother's liberty, if he be still alive : she believes he is, and wherefore y^e^ Elector has sent orders to his Adjutant Bannier to demand him vigorously. Count Witgenstein (who

[1] Stepney to Cresset, Dresden *Despatch*, $\frac{\text{July } 24}{\text{August } 3}$, 1694.

is here from Hannover) endeavours to mitigate y^e^ Elector by alledging he ought not to concern himself for a person who was actually in the Hannoverian service having received y^e^ pay three days before he was missing, besides that it is usual before laying down to make up accounts with the Regiment, to take leave at y^e^ head of it, and so have a Congé in form signed by y^e^ Master. All which ceremonies being omitted, he was lyable to be punished as a Deserter if he were yet to be found which y^e^ Elector of Hannover will know nothing of, he being a debauched rambling sparke, who kept irregular hours, and consequently it is next to an impossibility to given an account what may become of him. I cannot tell if y^e^ Elector of Saxony will be contented with these excuses. Count Witgenstein told me yesterday his greatest misfortune is that the Elector has not given y^e^ cognizance of this affaire to his Privy Council, but has referred it as he does almost all others to his favourite Haxthausen, and he communicates all to his cousin y^e^ Dane, who, being a *boutefeu*, seeks all occasions to embroile this house with that of Hannover, and thinks he has now got a good handle besides y^e^ old dispute about Saxe-Lawenburg, which is only covered with Ashes, and will certainly break out when time serves. If y^e^ Count be dead, I suppose y^e^ other syde of his sister's errand will be to try if she can recover any part of y^e^ $\frac{m}{30}$ Dollars (which as I told you) y^e^ Elector had lost to her brother in Flanders, and I am persuaded she will not take his death to heart when she has once got

her hand on his inheritance. They have lodged her in y^e^ Court."[1]

Augustus the Strong again told Bannier to prosecute his inquiries at Hanover with the utmost vigour; and thus it came about that, while the Hanoverian envoy in Dresden was being cordially received, the Saxon envoy in Hanover was pressing and threatening more than ever. Bannier declared he was instructed by his master to demand once more the restitution of Königsmarck sharply and energetically, and a refusal might entail mischief, for his master had promised their brother's production to the Count's sisters, and made a point of honour of fulfilling his promise. The situation was certainly very unpleasant for the Hanoverian government, for it was feared that Saxony might give its powerful support to the enemies of Hanover—Wolfenbüttel, Münster, and Denmark.

The brothers of Hanover and Celle, driven to extremities, appealed to the Emperor, and declared that unless Augustus the Strong took up a more reasonable attitude they would withdraw their troops from the Allies. This threat made a strong impression in Vienna, where the action of the Saxon Court was called preposterous. How could the Elector Augustus, the Emperor asked, demand from the Elector of Hanover a man who had not been given into his charge? The Emperor and the Elector of Brandenburg brought pressure to bear on Saxony, and both these potentates used their

[1] Stepney's *Despatch*, Dresden, August $\frac{14}{24}$, 1694.

influence in opposition to the promptings of the Countess Aurora. Stepney writes at this time :

"The Danish Haxthausen pretends to be going from hence in a day or two and y^e^ Countess of Königsmarck likewise. The Elector had used her with great distinction, and has supp'd with her twice with y^e^ Privy Counsellor Haxthausen at his House, some think these Curttisyes are only to put her of with good words since there is nothing more to be done for her Brother. However, Mr Bannier is still soliciting at Hannover, and Count Witgenstein making the best excuses he can here." [1]

It would seem from this that Aurora was losing ground ; but still Bannier was instructed to insist at the Court of Hanover for Königsmarck's restitution. He therefore offered Count Platen two alternatives—either Königsmarck was in confinement, or they had put an end to him. If the former, and his release was not to be obtained by mild measures, His Highness would be obliged to show his just resentment and take others ; and he let slip the remark casually that other Powers would be likely to interest themselves in the fate of Königsmarck, and make common cause with the Elector of Saxony if His Highness should be driven to resort to extreme measures. He went on to say that if Königsmarck did not reappear, "the witnesses whom they could produce would support Saxony to the astonishment of the whole world, and matters would come to extremities."

[1] Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden, August $\frac{17}{27}$, 1694.

But Bannier's threats at Hanover were checkmated by Witgenstein's representations at Dresden, and eventually the long and violent altercation came to an end without anything having been done. How could it be otherwise? Königsmarck was dead, and all the princes and potentates of the world could not bring him back to life.

Stepney thus describes the final scene of the dispute:

"Yesterday Count Witgenstein received an express from Hannover about Count Coningsmark, and had this morning audience of the Elector, in which (he tells me) he made long contestations in y^e^ Elector of Hannover's name, how willing he is to cultivate his friendship by doing all that could be desired of him, but that he protested he knows not what has become of y^e^ Person for whom application was made, and to y^e^ Question whether he was alive or dead no positive answer could be given, since after y^e^ best enquiry that could be made they were able to make no true discovery, which left a very strong suspicion that he is rather dead than Living. The Elector of Saxony seemed very moderate after this answer, as if he doubted not the truth of what had been offered and replyed, only that he hoped as an instance of friendship that y^e^ Elector of Hannover would give him notice as soon as he should learn any tidings of Count Coningsmark, and I believe here that y^e^ affair will end without causing any breach betwixt y^e^ two Electors. The Count's sister is gone hence, but I know not which course she steers." [1]

[1] Stepney to Blathwayt, Dresden, August $\frac{21}{31}$, 1694.

Thus ended the ineffectual search for Königsmarck. His disappearance nearly set Europe by the ears, and shows that he was a far more important personage than his enemies are wont to admit him to be.

If the Countess Aurora left Dresden, it was only for a time, and she returned later to be one of the many mistresses of Augustus the Strong. The result of their *liaison* was the birth of the most celebrated of all Augustus's three hundred and fifty-four illegitimate children—Maurice, the famous Marshal de Saxe.

Aurora soon found herself superseded in the fickle favour of the Elector, and a quarrel ensued between her and her Royal lover. Reproaches were mutual; and it would seem the Elector had also something against Aurora, since he reminded her that Cæsar's wife should be above suspicion. In reply she gave utterance to the celebrated *mot*: "The cases are not parallel: you are not Cæsar, and I am not your wife." The rest of Aurora's strange career and all that she did—how she withdrew to the Abbey of Quedlinburg, how she went on her ineffectual mission to the King of Sweden, and all the other events of her most eventful life, belong not to this history. Professor Palmblad has dealt with them fully in his historical novel *Aurora Königsmarck*.

CHAPTER XXV

THE DIVORCE

Here are full many men of counsel met;
Not one for me.

SWINBURNE, *Mary Stuart.*

Hope, withering, fled, and Mercy sighed, Farewell!

BYRON.

WE now return to the Princess at Ahlden, where she was still kept in rigorous imprisonment. The fiction of the Princess's so-called desertion was maintained even in the instructions which Duke George William gave to his commandant for the treatment of the Princess on her arrival at Ahlden. The commandant was Seigneur de la Fortière, Grand Falconer to the Court of Celle. And the Duke wrote:

"1. Since it is my intention that my daughter should remain at Ahlden, and have no communication, either by letter or other means, with any one whatsoever until she returns to her duties with the Electoral Prince, her consort, the Seigneur de la Fortière will make himself acquainted with these wishes of mine and what I have ordered, as I do by this present. He is not to convey, nor permit to be conveyed by others to my daughter, any letters except such as

come with an order signed by my hand; and in like manner he is not to dispatch, nor allow to be dispatched, any letter of my daughter's except with express permission from me.

"2. In conformity with this order, the Seigneur de la Fortière will instruct the women, valets, and other domestics in attendance on my daughter and all who enter the castle, that those who have, or receive, letters for any one whatsoever in, or out of, the castle must place them in the hands of the Seigneur de la Fortière on pain of death.

"3. All letters which come for any of the servants, or which are sent by any on their business, will likewise be given to the Seigneur de la Fortière, and read by him, before being allowed to pass; and those which are allowed to go must be stamped with his seal. If the Seigneur de la Fortière finds the slightest cause for suspicion in them, he will send them direct to me.

"4. The Seigneur de la Fortière can have all persons searched by the officer or soldiers of the guard who give him the slightest cause to suspect them of being implicated in bringing forbidden messages or letters.

"5. Except those at Ahlden in attendance on my daughter, no one else will enter the castle without my express permission; and the above-mentioned servants are to have no conversation with any strangers—that is to say, with any others but those of the household and people of Ahlden—except in the presence of the Seigneur de la Fortière or of some one commissioned by him for that purpose; and

THE ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE OF AHLDEN.

[*To face p.* 546.

the Seigneur de la Fortière will give orders that as soon as strangers arrive in the said Ahlden he shall be immediately informed of the fact.

"6. The women and other attendants on my daughter will not go out of the castle without the Seigneur de la Fortière's permission, and the remainder of the servants will only enter the castle at fixed hours to perform their duties, and will go away again as soon as they are done.

"7. My daughter will only leave the castle to take a walk, if she wishes, in the garden between the two moats, and then she must be accompanied by the Seigneur de la Fortière.

"8. If my daughter wishes to take her meals in the *salon* outside her rooms, she will have permission to do so, and the persons whose business it is to be in waiting, and the footmen will attend at these meals; but the Seigneur de la Fortière will always be present, and, after rising from table, everybody will leave my daughter except the lady-in-waiting and her chamber attendants.

"9. The Seigneur de la Fortière will have the power to require the officer of the guard, in virtue of the orders I have given him for that purpose, to adopt strong measures to ensure the exact execution and observance of the above, as far as such may be necessary."

It is very difficult to follow accurately the successive stages of the proceedings that followed the Princess's arrival at Ahlden, as most of the official documents

written at the time were published with intent to deceive, and the greater part of the divorce proceedings have been suppressed; but Dr. Köcher, sometime keeper of the Hanoverian Archives, has collected together sundry fragments of documents which remain, and has published them with comments of his own in *Sybel's Historische Zeitschift*—a most valuable contribution, in which he demonstrates that the divorce trial partook of the nature of a farce, inasmuch as everything had been determined beforehand. Schaumann, the historian, another eminent authority, on the other hand, maintains that the divorce proceedings were instituted from a real desire to bring about a reconciliation between the Princess and her husband. Here we have a conflict of opinion. But this much at least seems certain; the Court of Celle would gladly have brought about a reconciliation had it been possible, and the Court of Hanover would probably have reluctantly agreed to one if it had been possible for them to get rid of the Princess and at the same time to keep her territory. But the determined attitude of the Princess to break at all hazards with the hated House of Hanover rendered from the first any attempt at reconciliation out of the question; and Köcher is no doubt right in his main contention. The only point where we differ from him in his elaborate study of the divorce question is that he seems to treat the Princess as though she were a lay figure, to be pulled about at will, and overlooks the fact that she was a passionate and self-willed woman, just now driven to bay by the

death of her lover, and determined at all cost to free herself from her husband. Under no conditions would she make terms with Königsmarck's murderers, or return to the life she loathed; in her present state of mind she preferred imprisonment, or even death, to such an alternative. The only thing therefore that remained was to bring about a separation or divorce as expeditiously, and with as little scandal, as possible.

Meanwhile the Princess in the Castle of Ahlden was alone; her mother was not permitted to see her, and the only person suffered to approach her was a minister of religion. Soon after her arrival at Ahlden two ministers from the Court of Celle, Bernstorff and Bülow, came to wait upon the Princess. It must have been a bitter moment for her when she received them, for she looked to Celle for help, and none came. The two ministers spent some hours with her, and when they left they drew up a report of what happened in a protocol headed, "Report of what took place at Ahlden," which begins as follows:

"The reason of our journey was to tell the Princess the true state of affairs, that everything was discovered, and therefore nothing could be denied or questioned; to tell her what would be publicly said in her defence, and how she ought to speak in public and conduct herself in the forthcoming divorce case."

In this document Königsmarck is not mentioned, but it is easy to see what is referred to in the expression "everything was discovered." The true reason was

to be hidden, for the honour of the House; and the Princess was to acquiesce in a divorce on the ostensible ground of her wilful desertion. The ministers found her only too ready to fall in with their suggestions, and the report goes on to say: "and she acquiesces in the separation, and recognises that no other course could be taken. . . . They were to tell her what to do, and she would submit. . . ."

The ministers found her cast down and despondent, but hardly what they describe as penitent, for despite their statement "that everything was known," they failed to elicit an avowal of conjugal unfaithfulness. The Princess admitted appearances were against her. They might think her culpable or not as they pleased, but she denied the actual offence *in toto*, and nothing ever made her swerve from this position. In this she was borne out by Knesebeck, then far away from her beloved mistress and in prison at Springe. This lady, though examined and cross-examined and threatened with punishment unless she told the whole truth, absolutely denied that the Princess had been guilty with Königsmarck, though she admitted to "a few letters and indiscretions." Later she was examined again, on her removal to the fortress of Schwartzfels, and she still affirmed that the Princess was innocent, and no threats of imprisonment or torture made her swerve from her loyalty. Years later, when she had gained her liberty and petitioned Duke George William for her confiscated property, she did not omit to bear witness again to the innocence of the Princess.

This, of course, opens up the much-vexed question of how far the Princess's love for Königsmarck went. Some there are, like Duke Antony Ulrich, who believe the Princess to be absolutely innocent, even in thought. This theory however, is untenable, since both the Princess and Knesebeck admit, at least, to indiscretions. Others there are, like the Duchess d'Orleans, who considered the Princess absolutely bad ; but their bias is manifest, and they produce no evidence in support of their contentions. Between these two classes are the more numerous company of witnesses, who include such eminent names as Schaumann and Köcher. These do not believe the Princess guilty of *actual* unfaithfulness to her husband. Köcher says, in summing up an elaborate argument : "We shall probably therefore hit the mark aright when we say that the Princess wandered on the edge of an abyss by vouchsafing to a man who was a foreigner and of loose morals not a criminal intimacy, but a confidence which was a slight on duty and propriety."

But it must be remembered that Köcher and Schaumann do not accept the authenticity of the letters, which they had never examined and have never seen, save for the few fragments published by Palmblad, confused as to the cypher and the dates, and possibly a stray letter in one or two essays. There remains another authority, Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, who believes firmly in the authenticity of the letters, and yet agrees with Köcher that the love between the Princess and Königsmarck was never consummated. With all the good will in the world, it is not easy

to agree with this view, believing as we do in the genuineness of the letters, and when we remember the fiery passion breathed through them, the stolen meetings, the utter laxity of the morals of the time, and last, but not least, the harshness of the Princess's father, who would surely never have refused to see his only child and have condemned her to lifelong imprisonment if she had only been guilty of "indiscretion." When we remember all this, it must be admitted that the evidence against her is so strong as to be almost overwhelming. But let us give her the benefit of the doubt. This much is certain: she loved one man and one man only, she sacrificed everything for him, and she was faithful to her love in life and in death. Whatever were her mistakes, she was more sinned against than sinning, and it ill befits us to cast a stone.

When Bülow and Bernstorff returned to Celle, after their interview with the Princess at Ahlden, convinced that she was steadfast in her resolve never to return to Hanover, and would agree to anything which would bring about this result short of an avowal of actual guilt, matters were greatly simplified. The ministers of Celle were in favour of a separation, the Hanoverian government demanded a divorce, and, as the Princess's attitude was utterly unyielding, Celle gave way and a divorce was decided upon. We find Cresset about this time writing from Walsrode, a little country town near Ahlden:

"Our unlucky scene lies as it did, the divorce going forward, and we are all to be quite shamed.

I have been twice shooting with this Duke just under the walls of the house where his daughter is confined. I hear she is suddenly to be removed into the country of Hanover. Next post I will write what I can learn of it to my Lord Duke. At present I know nothing new. All things look tragical." [1]

The ministers of Hanover and Celle held several conferences at Engesen, where a plan was drawn up for the divorce of the Princess. It was resolved to form a special Consistorial Court to try the divorce case, and care was taken that everything should be done in due order and with an appearance of legality. Königsmarck's name was not to be so much as mentioned; indeed, how could it be mentioned when his avengers were knocking so loudly at the gates? Taking it for granted that the divorce would be decreed, the following arrangements were then made between the Elector and the Duke of Celle for the Princess's safe keeping and maintenance:

George William agreed to keep the Princess guarded at some magistrate's house in *his* country, and to settle on her the magistrate's house at Ahlden as her permanent residence in case of his demise. The

[1] Cresset's *Despatch*, August 14, 1694. The letter which Cresset mentions as being about to write to the Duke of Shrewsbury is not preserved in the State Paper Office, nor indeed are any letters of his at this time, save a few fragments probably overlooked, which have been quoted here. There is nothing bearing on the Princess or Königsmarck. As the English envoy's correspondence is voluminous just before and just after the catastrophe, these letters have been doubtless suppressed purposely: it is a pity, as they would have thrown great light on this vexed question.

retinue and personal attendants and guard which were to attend the Princess were arranged, and it was agreed that no changes should be made without the mutual approval of both the Elector of Hanover and the Duke of Celle. The Princess was to be allowed a sufficient establishment for her maintenance and that of her suite. Ernest Augustus was to allow her a yearly sum of eight thousand thalers (£1,200), and he agreed to raise this sum to £1,800 when her father died, and yet again by another £800 when she had completed her fortieth year—a sum total of £2,600 per annum, not a bad allowance when we consider the value of money in those days and the circumstances of the case. The Princess, moreover, was heiress to considerable property from her mother, which would remain untouched. In return, Duke George William conceded certain modifications of his daughter's marriage settlement, whereby the freehold lands he had bequeathed to her should pass directly to her son, Prince George Augustus, and the administration of the same should pass into the hands of the Electoral Prince. On only one point were the brothers unable to agree. Duke George William proposed that the love-letters of the Princess (the incriminating correspondence found in Königsmarck's rooms) should be sent to Celle, after the divorce, to be burnt, or they should be burnt at Hanover in the presence of the ministers of Hanover and Celle. This suggestion found no favour with Ernest Augustus, who put the matter off for the time being. Doubtless he feared that his brother might relent at some future

time towards his daughter, and he did not wish to lose this damning evidence against the Princess.[1]

Thus it will be seen that everything was settled before the Divorce Court assembled, and the verdict was treated as a foregone conclusion. The ministers drew out instructions for the judges and attorneys, and watched over the trial that ensued step by step.

The agreement above mentioned was signed by Duke George William and the Elector Ernest Augustus on September 1, 1694, and a few days later the Princess was brought over from Ahlden to the magistrate's house at Lauenau, in Hanoverian territory, so as to be nearer the scene of the trial. Even this slight change was not effected without difficulty, for the Princess viewed with terror any return to the Principality of Hanover; but she was pacified by being told that as soon as the divorce was decreed she would be allowed to return to the territory of Celle—she believed as a free woman. This made her all the more impatient for a divorce and the more ready to concede anything and everything demanded by her enemies. The story that the Princess, shortly after her arrival at Lauenau, took the sacrament in the presence of the Hanoverian ministers, solemnly vowing her innocence and daring Countess Platen to do the same, is very dramatic, but lacks confirmation. It would contradict the evidence of the few genuine documents still remaining, which go to show that the whole

[1] The fate of these letters is uncertain, but they were probably destroyed some years later by George II.

policy of the ministers of both Courts was to hush up any allusion to a criminal intrigue.

Everything having been now arranged, the tribunal of the Divorce Court began its solemn farce. The court was composed of a president and eight judges, four lay and four spiritual, in equal numbers from Celle and Hanover respectively. Privy Councillor Albert Philip von Busche was appointed President by both Hanover and Celle. All these judges were sworn by a special oath: "To judge in this matter uprightly and honestly to the best of our understanding, in accordance with godly and worldly rights and the custom of the Christian Evangelical Church, and not to let ourselves be led away or hindered by anything, whatever its name may be." A goodly oath indeed; and yet it had little meaning for most of them, though some of the judges had qualms of conscience and did not prove quite the docile tools they were expected to be.

On September 20 the Divorce Court assembled at Hanover and received the suit of the Electoral Prince, who prayed for a dissolution of marriage on the ground of his wife's wilful desertion and refusal to grant him his connubial rights. This was duly set forth in a formal document presented to the court by the Prince's attorney. After considering it for two days the court sent it to the Princess at Lauenau, and requested a reply, leaving it to her option to decide whether she would submit her answer in writing, or make it orally by word of mouth to a deputation of the court. This was a fair proceeding,

and guarded against the possibility of undue influence, but it did not agree with the ministerial programme; so the Government refused to sanction the alternative of an oral reply, lest the Princess might express herself too freely to the deputation. Marshal von Bülow, of Celle, and Thies, the attorney, were therefore directed by George William to go to Lauenau instead, and obtain a written declaration from the Princess in harmony with the policy already decided upon. Bülow was instructed, so Duke George William's directions read, "to seek an opportunity to speak to the Princess alone, and endeavour to remind her to take pains before everything else to express her answer in such terms as to give no possible further cause for exasperation [*aigreur*]." Further, Thies was to be introduced to the Princess in order to learn from her directly "whether she was agreeable to his superseding her attorney's functions, which, being the case, the Princess would accede to him full powers." Then the Princess "would furnish him with materials out of which he was to formulate her defence; and she was, among other matters, to declare positively whether she would, or could, ever again prevail upon herself to return to her consort, the Electoral Prince, and, if not, whether she would be content to accept the verdict of the court on the matter."

The result of this mission was exactly what might have been expected. The Princess was quite incapable of looking after her interests, especially in this case, where they seemed to run counter to her inclinations, for

she desired the divorce above all things, and fully believed that when it was obtained and she had obeyed her father's and her uncle's wishes she might safely trust to their indulgence and generosity. Subsequent events proved that she was wrong, but at the time her policy seemed the right one. She authorised the attorney to act for her as directed, and without ado signed a written declaration declaring in most emphatic language she would never again cohabit with her husband.

The Princess's declaration was withheld from the Divorce Court until it had been examined by the ministers. Vice-Chancellor Hugo of Hanover expressed himself dissatisfied with the wording, and he feared the Divorce Court would not be content. He therefore drafted another, more formally worded, to be submitted to the Princess.

As this document was in substance the same, the ducal brothers, who were then hunting at Göhre, professed indifference as to which should be presented; but Bülow put in a plea for the consideration of the Princess on the ground that she might be confused by having to sign another declaration. Bernstorff, always the enemy of the Princess, favoured the draft of Hugo, because it would have the effect "of inducing the court to imagine that the Princess was the much more self-willed and not to be overruled"; and he went on to write to Hugo in favour of his draft, saying: "It shows a more rebellious spirit [*contumacia*], and the court will on that account have all the more cause to give a verdict of divorce." The

matter was referred to Hugo, who naturally decided in favour of his own draft. Thies, the Princess's attorney, was then directed to go again to Lauenau and obtain the Princess's signature to this second document. He was instructed to exhort, "in a general way," the Princess to a reconciliation with her husband; but that the admonition was regarded as a mere form may be gathered from the fact that we find Bernstorff writing: "Although he [Thies] might bring the most powerful arguments to bear on the Princess's case in order to talk her over to return to her husband, he would effect nothing whatever." Bernstorff's surmise was quite right; the Princess was only too ready to play into the hands of her enemies, and Thies found her most impatient at the delay. She anxiously asked if the suit would result in a divorce. Her attorney replied that a definite declaration was necessary, the other not having been definite enough. She then took a pen and resolutely signed the new document laid before her, which was worded as follows:

"Now we [Sophie Dorothea] give the circumstances mentioned by the attorney of our Consort Louis, in the charge of desertion brought against us, their due place; but we cannot refrain from again adding that we adhere persistently to the resolution, once drawn up and constantly affirmed, that we will not, and cannot, ever again live in conjugal relations with our Consort Louis, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg, Prince Electoral, and we will therefore accept the verdict of the court on the matter."

Thies was by way of being a conscientious man, and had his doubts as to the wisdom of the suicidal policy the Princess was pursuing. He therefore entered upon his task of advising the Princess without seeming to persuade; but she would not hear him. He, however, told her frankly that the result of her declaration would assuredly be a verdict acquitting the Prince and allowing him to marry again, and convicting her as the guilty party, and forbidding her to marry. The Princess answered firmly: "In spite of this, my determination is unalterable." Then Thies added a clause to the Princess's declaration stating that:

"In spite of the fact that all suitable and urgent advice from higher authorities has been given to the Princess, and pressed finally by myself as her appointed attorney, yet it must, to my great regret, be stated that nothing more could be extracted from Her Serene Highness, except the written declaration enclosed with this."

These documents were then sent to the Divorce Court.

Despite all these elaborate stratagems and precautions, the very thing happened which the ministers wished to avoid. The Divorce Court refused to be satisfied with the written declaration, and insisted on the necessity of an oral hearing. To this end a deputation of the judges was sent to Lauenau, that they might hear the Princess's declaration from her own lips and judge whether any undue influence had been brought to bear upon her.

The ministers of both Hanover and Celle were alarmed at this hitch in the proceedings, and immediately took steps to prevent any untoward results. Another Conference was summoned at Engesen on November 15.

It is notoriously difficult to save those who are bent on their own destruction, as the Princess seemed to be; but in the meantime the Duchess of Celle was making every effort on behalf of her daughter, and seized on the opportunity afforded by this delay to urge some concessions. The result was that, when the Conference met at Engesen, Bernstorff brought forward, on the part of Duke George William, a motion to the effect that the separation should only be a judicial one (i.e. *a mensâ et thoro*); but the reason alleged—namely, that a complete separation would be prejudicial to the children—did not make the slightest impression on the Hanoverian ministers, who saw in this the hand of the Duchess of Celle. They replied with some logic, that if a separation of that kind was all that had been desired, it might have been arranged by the parties themselves without the services of the Divorce Court; and to make such a change so late in the day would cast a slight not only on the Electoral Prince, but on the House of Hanover. Seeing they would not give way, Bernstorff changed his tactics, and put in a plea that the verdict might at least not be made public. But the Hanoverian ministers declared that such a course would lead to prejudicial interpretations; and the Conference broke up without coming to an agreement. The

Elector of Hanover strongly supported his ministers, and sent to Celle the following communication :

"That because, as is well known, it was decided after careful consideration of the facts to bring forward a suit on the charge of desertion, that the honour and high reputation of the Electoral Prince and the Princess herself and their children might be guarded, and also of that of our most gracious selves, their parents, so the publication of the verdict is all the more unavoidable, as otherwise there would be every opportunity of interpreting the cause of the separation to the injury and prejudice of the persons just mentioned on both sides."

And the argument went on to say that it would be equally prejudicial to the children. Thereupon Duke George William gave way, and the Duchess of Celle was beaten.

This interlude also goes to prove that the verdict of the Divorce Court was already settled by the higher powers before the deputation from the judges went to Lauenau to admonish the Princess. The deputation consisted of two only, Judge Molan and the President Busche. Judge Molan entered upon his task in an earnest and honourable spirit. Busche, who was in the secret confidence of the ministers, contented himself with platitudes of the commonest order. Judge Molan, who was a worthy man, treated the Princess to a long dissertation on the duties of holy matrimony, quoting to her the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, vii. 10. Coming down from these heights, he

proceeded to point out to her, as her attorney had already done, that, as the culpable party, she would not be permitted to make a second marriage, though the privilege would be allowed to the other side. He also reminded her of what her children would lose when deprived of their mother, and expatiated on the grandeur of the position which the Princess was abandoning. He suggested that the dispute should be reconsidered under the influence of fervent prayer, at which a minister of religion might assist. But his admonitions and his prayers made absolutely no impression on the Princess, who declared that she could better serve the Almighty by remaining alone, and she was thankful to have the opportunity of withdrawing from the world. She insisted that under no circumstances whatever would she return to the Court of Hanover, or to the Electoral Prince, her husband. In short she reaffirmed verbally and with emphasis the declaration she had already made in writing. It is true that she had no alternative, for everything had been settled beforehand; but there is no reason to suppose that she was acting under compulsion, as all along she had retained a fixed desire to be free of Hanover at all costs. Yet, even so, the Divorce Court refused to be satisfied. They were conscious of the doubtful legality of the proceedings, and they were desirous of guarding their honour and saving appearances as far as possible. So the Princess had, for the third time, to sign a written declaration to the effect that:

"We adhere firmly to the resolution already expressed

by us in writing, that our attorney shall not oppose anything further that may be urged against us, but shall adhere to our previous resolution, and strive to bring the matter to a speedy issue."

The Divorce Court met again on December 1, and the Princess's reply and the report of the deputation were formally handed in. These papers were submitted to the Prince's attorney, and it was asked if His Highness persisted in his suit. Two days later the Prince's reply was handed in. The substance of it was as follows :

That His Highness had given this most important matter, with all the consequences it might entail, his most careful consideration. It was only with painful feelings he could decide to take this extreme course, and he had left no stone unturned to bring the Princess to a better frame of mind, and his father and father-in-law had also given themselves personally the greatest trouble about it. But as nothing had been effected by this means, and the issue proved that the Princess adhered to her resolution, and her purposed desertion had been quite clearly proved, the Prince felt bound to maintain the petition expressed in his suit.

The sword was now ready to fall, but at the eleventh hour the Duchess of Celle made one more effort on behalf of her daughter. We find that Duke George William entered a request for a lightening of the intended verdict. He took exception to the demand of the Court of Hanover that the sentence of the court should expressly forbid the Princess

SOPHIE DOROTHEA SPURNING THE DIADEM.

From an Old Print.

[*To face p.* 564.

to marry again, and so threatening was his tone that the judges began to hesitate about complying with the Hanoverian orders, and the verdict was postponed. In order to break down this opposition of the Duke of Celle, Vice-Chancellor Hugo, who held a brief for Hanover, drew up a long legal opinion for the direction of the Divorce Court, and sent it to Bernstorff at Celle for approval and return. This document is very interesting. The first part of the "opinion" deals wholly with legal matters; the second part, which considers the peculiar arguments of the case from the dynastic point of view of the Court of Hanover, may be quoted in full:

"1. The Princess has given evidence of wicked intentions, of her purposed flight from the country in secret, thereby bringing the House into everlasting shame and disgrace. It would not have been possible for this to occur, unless very bitter opponents who were interested in the ruin of the House had seized the opportunity to make use of her evil designs in their schemes.

"The House has been thereby cast into such disorder and danger as cannot be contemplated without a shudder. We must thank the kindness of Providence for having prevented it, and in addition consider what is to be expected in the future from a person who has ventured already on so desperate a scheme, and how extremely necessary it is to place not only practical, but legal, restraints upon her, which are best carried out by expressly forbidding her again to marry: there will thus be the less occasion for cavilling.

"2. The judges forming the deputation have reported how strongly the Princess desired the sentence of separation, and what joy she manifested on learning that it might soon be passed. It may be conjectured that if she had been of a good disposition she would have been deeply grieved at causing her own father so much pain, and bringing such injury on those who showered kindness and affection on her. She ought further to consider how she will fall from her high position. She ought also to show compassion for her children. But when a mother displays joy over her separation from her children, we may gather what is to be expected of her.[1]

"It is known, that before she conceived these evil designs, she had on different occasions expressed a longing to be a marchioness of France (these are people of no particular worth) rather than Princess of Brunswick-Lüneburg, for then she would be able to amuse herself better, whereas she was at present as good as a prisoner. Such a disposition is easily concealed for a time, but difficult to overcome. What can we opine from so intense a craving for a separation except that her intention is to seek some such position as that she has already hoped for? And such a course is all the more to be expected of her should we not refuse her the right to marry again in the judicial verdict."

Köcher (in whose article in *Sybel's Historiche*

[1] But Sophie Dorothea thought she would be allowed to see her children occasionally after the divorce. She had no idea that her retirement involved perpetual imprisonment.

Zeitschrift this is quoted) goes on to say: "In place of the third and fourth arguments, which are crossed out in the copy before me, the following is interpolated in Hugo's handwriting: 'There are still more serious considerations, which, however, cannot be well discussed.' The original words, however, which can be deciphered pretty clearly under the thick lines, are:

"3. She has an indulgent mother, who does not grasp the position of affairs, nor judge of them correctly, and who shows peculiarly little affection for this Electoral House.

"4. The Princess looks forward to a very large fortune from her mother. Her father also is not likely to forget her.

"5. [In short] We must be on our guard against the enemies of the House, and give them as little occasion as possible for gaining a hold on us.

"6. [To much the same effect, with arguments *ad Deum* thrown in]."

The "opinion" concludes with an apostrophe to the judges:

"This most lofty House has placed its safety and dignity in your hands, my lord judges, confiding in your prudence. Your country and innocent people have exposed the dangers assailing them to you, and demand your aid for their security," etc., etc.

It was therefore mainly the fear of the influence of the Duchess of Celle, as well as doubt of the vacillating spirit of Duke George William, which made the

Hanoverian government determined to bind the heiress of Celle as tightly as possible, and this document shows how anxious they were. For some days no answer was returned from Celle, and Hugo wrote two or three times, begging for a reply. It was the final duel between the Duchess of Celle and Bernstorff, with Duke George William between; and the Duchess got the worst of it, for, after considerable hesitation, the Duke gave way.

It is not possible to follow the exact order of the proceedings; but that the Duchess was beaten is obvious from the fact that on December 15 Thies handed in the final reply of the Princess, and as he repeated again the Princess's declaration we must conclude that an understanding had been arrived at. The verdict, which was delivered immediately, shows that the Princess's enemies had won. It runs as follows:

"In the matrimonial suit of the illustrious Prince George Louis, Electoral Prince of Hanover, against his consort, the illustrious Princess Sophie Dorothea, etc., we, constituted president and judges of the Matrimonial Court of the Electorate and Duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg, declare and pronounce judgment. After attempts have been tried and have failed to settle the matter amicably, and in accordance with the documents and verbal declarations of the Princess and other detailed circumstances, we agree that her continued denial of matrimonial duty and cohabitation is well founded, and consequently that it is to be considered as an intentional desertion. In consequence

whereof we have considered sentence, and now declare the ties of matrimony to be entirely dissolved and annulled. Since in similar cases of desertion it has been permitted to the innocent party to re-marry, while the other is forbidden, the same judicial power will be exercised in the present instance in favour of His Serene Highness the Electoral Prince.

"(Published in the Consistorial Court of Hanover, December 28, 1694)."

This sentence was signed by the president and all the judges, and delivered to the Princess at Lauenau on December 31. The same day—the last day of that evil year—she formally signified her acceptance of the verdict.

The result of the trial was duly communicated to the representatives of Hanover and Celle at foreign Courts, and from that time the Princess was politically dead. Her name was never mentioned in the Electoral Court of Hanover; it was struck out of the Church prayers, and expunged from official documents. Thrust out from the Hanoverian Court, she found her father's Court also closed to her, and she entered upon her long captivity of thirty-two years—a captivity from which death alone was to bring release.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PRISONER OF AHLDEN

Oh ! give me liberty—
For were ev'n Paradise my prison,
Still I should long to leap the crystal walls.
DRYDEN.

FOR more than a year after the divorce the Princess was detained at Lauenau, in the Principality of Hanover, despite the stipulation Duke George William had made that, when the trial was ended, his daughter should be sent back to his keeping in the territory of Celle. Various reasons caused this delay, which amounted to a breach of contract, the chief being the fear that the Duke of Celle would relent towards his daughter.

So far, the Hanoverian government had won all along the line. They had got rid of the Princess and had kept her property, and they were determined that nothing should upset so admirable an arrangement for them. It was known that the Duchess of Celle was moving heaven and earth on behalf of the unhappy Princess (nor did she cease her efforts as long as she lived), and it was feared that if she and Sophie Dorothea came together the Duke

might be persuaded into seeing his daughter, and then all would be undone. Moreover, there was a strong party at Celle, including many persons of rank and influence, who loudly declared that their Princess had been hardly and unfairly treated, and they were ready to promote an agitation in her favour and to question the legality of her divorce, certainly of her imprisonment. Popular demonstrations at Celle were things to be avoided by those who desired the union of the Duchies, and it was determined to keep the Princess locked up in Hanover territory until the excitement had cooled down.

The behaviour of the Elector and Electress and all the Electoral family, throughout this unhappy affair, was callous in the extreme. It would only have been seemly if, after a painful family scandal such as this, the Electoral Court had gone into retirement for a time; but the annual carnival and festivities took place at Hanover as if nothing had happened. Nor did the death of Queen Mary II. of England, though it put the Electoral Court into mourning and advanced the Electress Sophia one step nearer the English throne, make any difference to the pleasure-loving Hanoverians.[1]

The solitary confinement of the Princess at Lauenau gave her ample time for reflection, and she gradually awoke to a sense of her position. The murder of

[1] "The Carnaval here is very provoking, but they cannot live without it; they are a sort of people that can rejoice even in their own disgraces." Cresset's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 11, 1695.

her lover had stunned her for a time, and her passionate grief at his loss had almost robbed her of reason. The desire to break absolutely with Hanover, where she had suffered so much misery and insult, amounted to a mania, and this, added to the fact that "everything was known," had led her into acquiescence with anything and everything that had been proposed to her. She now began to see that she had been betrayed into forfeiting her interests, and had consented to a divorce, and the surrender of her property and rank, without insisting upon adequate guarantees. She, all along, had been given to understand by her attorney and the ministers who visited her that, when once the divorce was accomplished, she would be free, allowed to return to the territory of Celle, and given an establishment where she could live in retirement, which was all she now desired. Her father's anger, she hoped, would be mollified by her submission; but her hope turned out to be vain. That she would be shut out from his Court, kept a strict prisoner, and forbidden to even see her mother did not enter her mind. Too late she saw that she had been entrapped into a false position.

There is no doubt that this harsh treatment of Sophie Dorothea was thoroughly approved by the Electress Sophia (if, indeed, it was not in some respects instigated by her), who in this connexion appears in a most unamiable light. Knowing what manner of man her son was, she might have made some allowance for his unhappy young wife; but she had

no feeling for her save hatred and contempt. Her letters to her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans, at this period are missing (they have evidently been purposely destroyed); but the letters of the Duchess to the Electress are still extant, and have been published. They are, for the most part, replies to her aunt's letters, and are an echo of the hatred with which the Electress Sophia pursued the disgraced daughter of the d'Olbreuse. Elizabeth Charlotte calls the Princess "a miserable creature, who deserves every misfortune"; she denounces her "wicked tongue," and describes her as "a person as malicious as she is frivolous," her frivolity being an inheritance from her French mother, whose bad training of her daughter was the fount of all her misfortunes.

Incredible though it may seem, both the Electress and her niece took the part of the Countess Platen, and defended her against the defamatory rumours that were flying about. The part the Countess had played in the murder of Königsmarck and the consequent ruin of the Princess were matters of common gossip at every Court of Europe, and her conduct universally reprobated. King Louis questioned Elizabeth Charlotte about it at table at Versailles; but the Duchess denied everything, and writes to her aunt that she told the King: "So far as concerns Countess Platen, I believe, from what I had heard of the Princess and from my own knowledge of the Countess, that the former is a much more evil-minded person than the latter, whom I believe to be a very good sort of person."

Again we find the Duchess d'Orleans writing :

" There is no likelihood that the Countess Platen would have degraded herself with so young a man as Königsmarck. I am much more inclined to believe that she flattered him in the hope of making a match between him and her daughter, for he was a good catch. It may be, however, that Königsmarck wished, from motives of vanity, to make the former think that all women were in love with him, in order that his society might be the more acceptable to her, for all young fellows are generally vain ; and when the Princess afterwards found herself betrayed, she imagined that the Countess was the cause of it. I am sorry for the Countess, who it seems has taken the matter so much to heart that she has got ill. Such slanders, when not true, should be simply despised and laughed at, and not taken seriously. It is miserable to see oneself so badly treated by the very persons whom one imagined held one dear, and I am not surprised that the Countess has taken it to heart."

The Countess Platen was ill not only in body, but in mind. Her reputation had suffered a severe blow, and, despite the protection of the Elector and the ægis of the Electress, a number of personages about the Court looked coldly upon her. Both Königsmarck and the Princess were popular, and many official people among the Hanoverian nobility shunned the woman whom they believed to have been the cause of the death of the one and the ruin of the other, while at Celle her name was held in execration. All this

served to enrage the Countess the more against the imprisoned Princess, and she did all she could to prevent any mitigation of her punishment. In this she was supported by the Electress Sophia. Schaumann indeed holds the Electress primarily responsible for all the Princess's troubles, and declares that: "The presence of the Princess Sophie Dorothea in Hanover was from the first impossible and untenable on account of the unquenchable hatred and scorn which the Electress Sophia, her mother-in-law, evinced towards her." We have seen that the Electress Sophia was capable of dissembling this hatred and of acting with outward consideration to her daughter-in-law; but the moment she caught her tripping, all her latent enmity blazed forth, and she rejoiced to see the Hanoverian Court rid of the daughter of her hated rival. The Princess had fallen through her own folly, and now was the time to trample on her. To the hatred of these two women, the wife and the mistress of the Elector, must be attributed many of the rigours of Sophie Dorothea's imprisonment, and her detention at Lauenau.

At last, owing to the persistent efforts of the Duchess of Celle, who was never tired of pointing out to her husband the breach of contract involved in the Elector's keeping the Princess so long in Hanoverian territory, the captive was removed from Lauenau to Ahlden, where she had been confined for some weeks prior to the divorce.[1]

[1] "The unlucky Princess is still in this country and they talk of removing her suddenly into her father's territory."—Knatchbull's (secretary to Cresset) *Despatch*, Hanover, February 22, 1695.

On February 28, 1695, the Princess left Lauenau and returned under strong escort to the Castle of Ahlden, which had meantime been prepared for her reception. According to the arrangement arrived at between the two brothers at Engesen, on her arrival there she was formally given the rank and title of "Duchess of Ahlden," and was accorded a suite of attendants, a military escort of cavalry and infantry, and a governor of the castle. There was yielded to her an outward semblance of honour; but in reality the title was a blind to conceal her real position from the world, the suite were spies, the escort and the governor her gaolers.

Except for one brief interlude of a few months' duration, Ahlden was henceforth the Princess' residence and prison to the day of her death—more than thirty years later. A description of the place may therefore be of interest. With a view to writing this book, I visited Ahlden on September 10, 1898, and made the following notes the evening of the same day:

"It was not without difficulty that I discovered Schloss Ahlden was still in existence; many people in Hanover had never heard of it. I, at last, found that there was a village of Ahlden, with a magistrate's house still standing, near the country town of Walsrode, some twenty miles from Hanover; and the nearest station was Reitlagen. Acting on this information, a friend and myself set out from Hanover at 7 a.m. by the local train to Reitlagen. At that

early hour we were almost the only passengers, and the plain, over which the single line of railway ran, was enveloped in a thick mist. We travelled very slowly, stopping every few minutes at some little wayside station. A bell was fixed to the engine to warn stray cattle off the line, and as we went through the fog it tolled like a funeral knell. By-and-by the mist began to lift, and we saw we were traversing a flat, marshy country. There were reeds, thistles, flags and rushes in the grass fields, and a good deal of common land, on which nothing but scrub and brushwood seemed to grow. About 9 o'clock the train pulled up at the little station of Reitlagen. Here we found a conveyance to take us to Ahlden, which was said to be some five miles distant; it proved to be much nearer.

"By this time the mists had lifted, the sun was shining brilliantly. As we drove along the dusty road, bordered by poplars and limes, we passed a cottage or two with gardens full of plum-trees laden with purple fruit, and every now and then a patch of yellow lupin. The land was for the most part rough pasture, and the country reminded me of the fen districts of Cambridgeshire, and a windmill and a flight of plover served to strengthen the resemblance. We drove across the Aller, which shone like steel under the cloudless sky, and then suddenly, long before we anticipated, we saw a red roof peeping out among the trees on the south bank of the river, and the driver pointed with his whip and said, 'There is Schloss Ahlden.' In the distance the castle looked

like a fair-sized English manor-house, but on closer inspection it proved to be something different. The moat had long since been filled up, and the drawbridge yielded place to a short avenue of limes; but the square entrance-gateway still remained, and externally the castle was little changed.

"Above the gateway was the date of the building of the castle—1613—and an elaborate coat-of-arms, carved in stone, supported by figures of Piety and Justice. The irony of it! There was little of either piety or justice in the treatment meted out to the hapless captive who gave the castle its sole title to fame. There was also an inscription to show that it was erected by Duke Christian of Brunswick-Lüneburg as the magistrate's house of the district.

"Passing under the arched gateway, rudely painted with frescoes, we found ourselves in a grassgrown quadrangle: one wing only, the left as we entered, had been inhabited by the Princess Sophie Dorothea.

"Entering the doorway in the centre of the wing, we mounted a wooden staircase, traversed a corridor with a rough floor and whitewashed walls, and presently found ourselves in the Princess's apartments. They consisted of a bedroom and sitting-room of moderate size, say twenty-two feet by sixteen, leading from one another, with a bare ceiling and wooden floor. The rooms were destitute of furniture, and we were told that they had never been used since the Princess died in them. The sleeping-room had two windows, looking over the garden towards the village, and an alcove for the bed. The sitting-room had two windows also,

SOPHIE DOROTHEA'S WING OF THE CASTLE OF AHLDEN.

[*To face p.* 578.

looking across the Aller over the marsh land. Beyond these apartments was a larger room, now partitioned, which had served as a dining-hall for the suite and attendants. The Princess was permitted, if she wished, to dine with her household, sitting at the head of the table. The rest of the wing was occupied by her suite.

"Another side of the quadrangle was the magistrate's house, then inhabited by the Governor; a third served as barracks for the military guard; and the fourth as outhouses and stables. In reality the Princess had for her own personal use only two small rooms, and the whole building was no larger than a moderate-sized English country-house. Even as we saw it on a bright September morning it was indescribably dreary: in the winter, with the mists and floods, it must be a veritable 'House on the Marsh,' and to the poor prisoner who wore her life out there, it must have seemed a Castle of Despair.

"The castle is in tolerable repair, and is still used as the magistrate's house of the district, and justice is dispensed there at stated times. The magistrate no longer resides there. It is in charge of a castellan, who is also a farmer and carpenter in the village. We found this official courteous and willing to give us any information he possessed, which unfortunately was not much.

"There are absolutely no relics of the Princess remaining at Ahlden, for the Hanoverian government, after her death, did everything to stamp out her name and her memory. Her picture, which hung in the

castle for many years, was sent to Herrenhausen. Only fifteen years ago two large boxes of papers at Ahlden, said to have belonged to her, were ordered to be sent to Hanover. They were put on a cart, to be dispatched from Reitlagen by train, but on the way to the station they mysteriously disappeared. Whether they dropped out of the cart, or whether they were stolen none can say; they have not been heard of from that day until now. We were told this by the castellan, who assumed an air of mystery on this and other matters. He pointed out to us the window from which the unfortunate Princess was said to gaze with wistful eyes for hours together across the marsh, looking for the deliverance that never came. Year in and year out, for thirty years and more she would gaze from this window, while youth went by and middle age went by and old age crept on, until one November morning she was seen no more.

"From the castle we walked down the village street to the little Lutheran Church—a plain, ugly building, part of which is ancient, but most of it built during Sophie Dorothea's residence at Ahlden. We saw the organ which the Princess gave to the church, which bears the inscription—

PRESENTED BY H.S.H. THE DUCHESS SOPHIE DOROTHEA, 1721;

and we were pointed out the place which she was said to have occupied when she attended divine worship, a wooden pew in the second gallery. Most authorities

say that she was never permitted to enter the church, and a minister attended her in the castle; but local tradition contradicts this statement, the truth probably being that at first she was not permitted, but when the stringency of her prison rules was relaxed a little she was allowed to attend public worship. It is said that she was conducted to and from the church, only a few yards from the castle gate, by an escort. She was not allowed to walk about the village, only in the castle garden, which is very small, hardly larger than a prison yard, and bounded on the one side by the Aller, and on the other by the moat and marsh. She was permitted to drive a distance of six miles from the castle, along a certain road to the west. There is a stone bridge on the way to Hayden which marked the six miles' limit of the drive. The Princess was never allowed to cross this bridge, nor could she drive along any other road but this. Thus far and no farther could she go; this way and none other for thirty years. How tired she must have got of it! When the weather was fine she drove herself in a cabriolet, and when it was cold, or wet, she was driven in a closed carriage. She was always accompanied by a lady-in-waiting and a guard of soldiers. She was fond of driving very fast, and would tear furiously up and down the road, which she would traverse many times.

"Local tradition among the peasants of Ahlden still hands down the picture of the mysterious great lady of the castle, always beautifully dressed, and with diamonds gleaming in her dark hair, galloping up and

down the road, followed by an escort of cavalry with drawn swords.

"The village of Ahlden has to-day some thousand inhabitants. The oak trees and red-tiled roofs give it the appearance of a Hampshire village, but the country around is like Norfolk at its flattest and dreariest. The village is made up of three or four irregular streets, two or three beerhouses, and a large school. The memory of the 'Duchess of Ahlden' still lingers among the village folk; they sell postcards with her portrait on them, and speak with pity of her fate.

"Certain authorities at Hanover warned me that I should find absolutely nothing at Ahlden and my visit would be a waste of time. On the contrary, I found the place full of interest and rich in tradition. Without seeing Ahlden it is impossible to realise the utter loneliness of this poor lady's thirty-two years of confinement there."

There were three governors at Ahlden during the years of the Princess's captivity. The first, the Seigneur de la Fortière, a noble of Celle, until 1702; then Charles Augustus von Bothmer, a Hanoverian noble, from 1702 to 1721; and Sigismund, Count Bergest, from 1721 to 1726, the year of her death. A certain George von Busche, a relative of the President of the Divorce Court, held office in her household, but not as governor; also a Herr von Marlortie,—they were probably gentlemen-in-waiting. Among her ladies-in-waiting we have the names of

Madame von Ilten, Madame von Marlortie, and Madame von Arenswald.

When the Princess had settled down at Ahlden certain concessions were granted to her to support the theory of her being duchess of the place. She was allowed, through an agent or deputy, the administration of her property and of the Ahlden territory. This extended for several miles, and included the towns of Retham and Walsrode and certain custom-house stations on the Weser and Aller. She was also given the nominal management of her household, which was fairly numerous. It consisted of one or two ladies-in-waiting, one or two gentlemen-in-waiting, and two pages. Among the domestics were two valets, fourteen footmen, twelve female servants, three cooks, a confectioner and baker, and a butler. There were also the Governor of the castle and the escort of forty soldiers, cavalry and infantry.

As time went on the Princess grew interested in the management of her property and household, and these things helped to pass many of her weary hours. She also took the poor of the village under her care, and did what she could to help them, though she was not permitted to enter their cottages. She interested herself in the village schools, and the children used to come to her on their *fête* days and receive from her hands prizes and little gifts. Her name became a household word round the country-side for kindness and benevolence, and for works of pity and mercy. As Duchess of Ahlden she was permitted some little state: she held a small

levée on certain days, at which the local magnates, clergy and nobility, with their wives, were wont to attend; but visitors were limited strictly to people who lived within her territory of Ahlden; and the Governor of the castle and the ladies- and gentlemen-in-waiting were always present at these receptions. She was not permitted to return these visits.

The Princess was scrupulous in the observance of religious duties; she restored the church and enriched it by various gifts. The parish minister acted as her chaplain, and read prayers daily to the garrison and household in the large dining-room aforesaid. The Princess and her ladies listened in a room adjoining, the door being left ajar. Her titular rank was always outwardly respected, but she was subjected to any number of petty and insulting restrictions. She was never allowed to leave the castle at night under any circumstances whatever; her letters were supervised, and every letter which came in and went out of the castle was read. Despite this, she carried on an active correspondence with her mother and acquaintances, which gradually increased in volume. Her great grievance during these early years at Ahlden was that she was not permitted to see her mother. The Duchess of Celle persistently endeavoured to break through this rule, but the Hanoverian government made such strong representations to the Duke of Celle of the evils that would follow, that, despite her tears and entreaties, she could not gain permission. Even if the Duke had wished to intervene, which may be doubted, Bernstorff

was always on the alert to counteract the influence of the Duchess. It was known that Duke Antony Ulrich was in communication with the Duchess, and warmly championed the cause of the imprisoned Princess, and the Hanoverian government feared, or pretended to fear, that a new intrigue would be set on foot against them, and perhaps a new attempt at flight.

The Princess, therefore, though treated with every outward semblance of respect, remained a prisoner. At first she was not allowed outside the castle gates ; but her health suffering from the confinement, she was granted another concession and permitted to take her daily drives. Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, in his *Herzogin von Ahlden* quotes the following words taken from the mouth of an old woman of Ahlden named Marie Ratze, about the year 1800. This old woman was then ninety-six years of age, had worked in the Princess's apartments as chambermaid, and remembered her well. She says: "The Princess was of middle height and rather stout, and during the first years of her sojourn at Ahlden was exceedingly beautiful. Her hair was jet black, and the diamonds, which she never forgot to put in her hair when she went out for her airings, shone with great brilliancy." Thus we see how a generation or two spans the intervening centuries.

Sophie Dorothea had inherited from her mother the Frenchwoman's love of dress, and all through the years of her imprisonment she took pleasure in devising and wearing elaborate toilettes, and in decking

herself with jewels, though there was no one to see them but her little household and the few local magnates round about. This would go to prove that her thoughts were not so detached from the world as some of her chroniclers untruly assert. On the contrary, from the beginning of her imprisonment to the day of her death, she took a keen interest in all that was going on in the world outside, and kept herself remarkably well informed of contemporary events not only in Hanover and Celle, but in England and the Courts of Europe. Yet all the while she was politically dead, and, her father being set against her and her mother powerless, the only way she could hope to recover her position was through her children; but her piteous appeals and oft-repeated prayers to be allowed to see them were always refused, nor was she permitted to carry on an open correspondence with them, though later she was able to smuggle communications through secretly.

When at last the Princess realised, in her solitary Ahlden, that though granted an allowance and a separate establishment on her father's territory as stipulated, it was the intention of her enemies to keep her a prisoner, perhaps for life, she saw too late the trap into which she had fallen, and she continually petitioned the Elector Ernest Augustus for her freedom; nor did she cease to struggle for liberty till the day of her death. In the early part of her captivity she was pacified by being told that she would probably get what she wanted by quietly submitting to the will of the Elector for a

time, and she was reminded that he had always been as indulgent towards her as circumstances would allow. She acted on this hint and submitted to the very letter of the law, however much she rebelled against it in spirit. So far did she carry this submission, that one night when a fire broke out in her wing of the castle, which she was forbidden to leave after sunset on any pretext whatever, she was seen pacing up and down the corridor almost frantic with terror, her jewel-box under her arm, yet refusing to quit the wing, in spite of the encroaching flames, without a signed order from the Governor. She was assured that her good behaviour would bring its reward.

Thus passed the first three years of the Princess's captivity at Ahlden—three years of hope deferred. Even her mother counselled patience, and wrote that things were working in her favour, when suddenly their hopes were dashed to the ground by the death of the Elector Ernest Augustus, which took place in January, 1698. Ernest Augustus had been suffering from ill-health for years, and his death was not altogether unexpected. He was an able ruler and an astute politician, and under his rule Hanover grew and prospered, and was raised from the obscurity of a dukedom to the dignity of an electorate. His failings were a lack of straightforwardness, a love of display, and allowing himself to be ruled by mistresses, notably by the notorious Countess Platen. But his Court was brilliant, he was good-natured and open-handed to a fault, and his subjects infinitely

preferred him to the sullen and niggardly ruler who succeeded. But George Louis, now the Elector George, was strong where his father was weak, and from the first he made it clear that he would have no petticoat interference in politics. He retained Count Platen nominally as his Prime Minister, but he took the management of affairs into his own hands. He gave the Countess Platen to understand that her day was over, and the ex-mistress retired in dudgeon to Monplaisir, and there, suffering torments from disease, she dragged out the remaining years of her infamous life.

Another and more illustrious lady also found her position much impaired by the Elector's death. This was none other than the Electress Sophia, who during the last few years had been steadily gaining power and influence. The Elector George disliked his mother, who had opposed him in the primogeniture, and would not suffer from her the slightest interference in State affairs. He relegated her to Herrenhausen, gave her a mean allowance, and even neglected to pay her the proper honour and respect to which she was entitled as his mother and as Electress-Dowager, and which her age, rank, and high character undoubtedly demanded. The proud spirit of the old Electress felt these slights keenly, but she was too wise to resent them openly, and she betook herself once more to the consolations of philosophy and to watching her prospects in England, which, since the birth of Anne's son, the little Duke of Gloucester, had not been of the rosiest.

Even here she was molested by her son, who persistently meddled in her English schemes. But one consolation at least was hers—the daughter of "the little clot of dirt" would never take precedence of her as Electress at the Hanoverian Court, and Sophia determined that nothing she could do should be left undone to keep her daughter-in-law safely shut up in Ahlden.

The Elector George, though he differed from his mother in most things, was at one with her as to this. He knew the divorce was of doubtful legality and might any day be upset by a revision, so he confirmed it by declaring his resolve to act strictly upon the letter of the agreement signed by his father and the Duke of Celle: he would not permit his wife to assume the title of Electress, and he reaffirmed the order that she was always to be styled the Duchess of Ahlden. Thus her husband's accession to the Electoral dignity made no difference to the rank and position of Sophie Dorothea, but it made a great deal of difference to her chances of freedom. The new Elector hated his cast-off wife with sullen vindictiveness, whereas the old Elector had only been harsh to her from motives of policy, and because he was instigated by her enemies. The Elector George determined from the first to maintain the existing arrangement—a very convenient one for him, and he had no desire to see his wife back again. He was happy in the society of his Ermengarda Melusina, whose temper was always equable, who meddled not in politics, and who only thought of enriching herself. He also found variety in the society

of the other mistresses whom he added from time to time to his unattractive harem.

Four years of captivity (one at Lauenau and three at Ahlden) had now brought Sophie Dorothea to a more reasonable frame of mind. She regretted bitterly her lost freedom, and she was now as eager to return to the world as she had once been to retire from it. So anxious was she to see her children, that she was willing for their sake to humble herself to her enemies. She was not always quite consistent. When the tidings of the death of Ernest Augustus reached her, probably urged by her mother, she wrote the following letters, which are still preserved in the Hanoverian Archives :

"AHLDEN, *January* 29, 1698.

"*To the Elector George Louis.*

"MONSIEUR,—I have the honour to write to Your Highness to assure you that I take a real share in your grief at the death of the Elector your father, and I pray God that He may console you, that He may bless your reign with His most precious favours, and that He may console Your Highness with every form of prosperity. These are prayers that I shall make every day of my life for you, and I shall always regret having displeased you. I beg you to grant me pardon for my past faults, as I still entreat you herewith on my knees with all my heart. My sorrow for them is so keen and so bitter that I cannot express it. The sincerity of my repentance should obtain pardon from Your Highness ; and if

to crown your favour you would permit me to see and embrace our children, my gratitude for such longed-for favours would be infinite, as I desire nothing so earnestly as this, and I should be content to die afterwards. I send a thousand prayers for your preservation and good health, and am,

"Submissively and respectfully, Monsieur,

"Your Highness's most humble and obedient servant,

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA."

"AHLDEN, *January* 29, 1698.

"*To the Electress Sophia.*

"MADAME,—It is my duty as well as my pleasure to assure Your Highness that there is no one who takes more share than I do in your grief at the death of the Elector your consort. I pray God with all my heart, Madame, that He will console you and keep you for many years to come in all prosperity and good health. I beg of you once again to pardon me for everything that I have done to incur your displeasure and to take some interest in me with the Elector your son. I implore you to grant me the pardon that I so earnestly long for and to permit me to embrace my children. And I long also to kiss Your Highness' hands before I die. If you would grant me this favour I should be filled with gratitude. I beg you to do me the honour to believe that nothing equals the infinite respect with which I remain, Madame,

"Your Highness's most humble and obedient servant,

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA."

No reply was vouchsafed to these piteous appeals. The sullen Elector never mentioned his wife's name, and the Electress Sophia dismissed the prayer with angry scorn. Seeing that no hope was to be expected from that quarter, the Princess wrote to her mother, and besought her to seize the opportunity afforded by the change of government to effect some amelioration of her unhappy lot, or at least to prevent it from becoming harder. The Duchess of Celle made strong representations to the Duke, and earnestly pleaded that their child might no longer be kept in imprisonment. But the Duke could do nothing of himself, even if he would, as it would involve a breach of the agreement arrived at four years ago with the Hanoverian government; yet he relented so far as to give his wife permission to go and see her daughter at Ahlden, and the new Elector, who had his own reasons for wishing to be on good terms with his uncle, did not venture to do more than protest. A good deal of capital has been made out of the fact that the Elector George gave the Duchess of Celle leave to visit her daughter, but in reality his permission was not asked; the Duke of Celle granted it on his own initiative, and the order was never afterwards revoked. All the other mitigations of the Princess's lot were effected before the old Elector's death. Backed by the Electress Sophia, the new Elector flatly refused to grant his wife the slightest indulgence.

We may imagine with what joy the imprisoned Princess hailed her mother's visits. After four long

years they met again, and were able to exchange confidences and take counsel together. But it was too late to effect much. The Duchess had lost all political power and the Princess's imprisonment had now become an accepted fact; nothing they could say, and nothing they could do, availed against the vindictive hatred of the Court of Hanover.

Shortly after this concession Sophie Dorothea's heart was rejoiced by the news of the escape of her faithful friend, Eléonore Knesebeck, from the fortress of Schwartzfels, where she had been confined the last four years. Knesebeck's escape was little short of miraculous. For a long time no one knew where she was imprisoned, and her disappearance seemed almost as mysterious as Königsmarck's; but at last her sister at Brunswick, Frau von Maitsch, received intelligence that she was a prisoner at Schwartzfels, and set on foot a plan for her release. The poor Knesebeck had been made to suffer great hardships. She was imprisoned in one small cell in the tumble-down fortress, which she was never permitted to leave, given the coarsest food, and was waited on by one old woman. At last the roof of her prison partly gave way, and a tiler was instructed to repair it. This tiler turned out to be a friend in disguise, and one night he let down a rope, which Knesebeck tied round her waist; she was then pulled up through the hole in the roof and lowered down the prison walls. She had a long drop, for the rope was too short; but she managed to regain her feet, and fled with all speed to Wolfenbüttel, where she received a warm welcome.

Her first steps were to petition for the restitution of her property and bear testimony again to the innocence of herself and her mistress. The Hanoverian government were much perturbed by the escape of their prisoner, and gave orders that the Princess at Ahlden was to be watched more strictly than ever. Inquiries were made at Schwartzfels to discover how Knesebeck had escaped, and her vacant cell was carefully searched. It was found that the unfortunate Fräulein had passed her days in writing with charcoal on the whitewashed walls of her prison, her blessings and curses, complaints and consolations. These writings were copied for the Hanoverian Privy Council and form very quaint reading; they are still preserved in the Archives at Hanover. We have first of all inventories of the confiscated property of the imprisoned lady, for which she afterwards put in a claim, and then a large number of utterances as to her wrongs, and asking to know why she was imprisoned. "I imagine," she says, "it is on account of the Princess. The Hanoverian government must have committed a great wrong, as they want to stop my mouth; for if they can be responsible to the whole world for what they have done to the Princess, may I not speak too? If she be rightly judged, how should I dare to speak untruthfully—I, a poor, miserable girl—against an Elector? If he be acting justly, how could I speak wrongfully? Is he not powerful enough to repress a thousand girls like me? What is the meaning of the Government stopping my mouth? what are they afraid of my saying? It is clear from this they must have

committed a great injustice, and so they choke and repress me with force that their injustice may not be brought to light." She repeatedly laid stress on the fact that four crimes were laid to her charge. "I am so important in the eyes of the Hanoverian councillors that they have broken the Fifth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Commandments on my account: the Fifth in that they try to kill my body and soul by cruelty; the Seventh by kidnapping me; the Eighth by laying four false crimes to my charge; and the Ninth by stealing my property." But neither her prayers in prison, nor her clamourings when out of it, induced the Hanoverian government to make her any restitution, though the Duchess of Celle helped her all in her power, and she found a warm champion in Duke Antony Ulrich. She lived for several years at Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel, and was later taken into the service of Sophie Dorothea's daughter, the Queen of Prussia. She never married, and died as she had lived, protesting her mistress's innocence and her own.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FLIGHT OF YEARS

(1698—1714)

The moving Finger writes, and having writ
Moves on ; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

OMAR KHAYYAM.

THE next few years brought no further relief to the prisoner of Ahlden, though the Duchess of Celle was regular in her visits and did everything to carry consolation to the captive. Sophie Dorothea had frequent news of her children, for they were often at Celle, and their grandmother Eléonore did not fail to impress them with a sense of their mother's wrongs. It seems their secret sympathies were with their imprisoned mother, whom they were never permitted to see, nor at Hanover even to mention her name. Duke George William was extravagantly fond of his grandson George Augustus, and often took him with him on his hunting expeditions. The old Duke gave the boy much good advice, which young George sometimes forgot to follow ; but he always remembered his grandfather with affection and respect.

Many years later, when he was George II. of England, babbling reminiscences by the bedside of his dying consort Caroline, Lord Hervey relates that, "he said that the Duke of Zelle was fond of him, but had often told him, as well as he loved him, if he ever found him guilty of a base action, and that he should prove a liar or a coward, he would shoot him through the head with his own hand." [1]

George Augustus must have been a lovable youth, and his early portraits show him to have been very like his mother, especially in his large, almond-shaped eyes. About this time he made a determined effort to see his mother. The story goes that one day when he was hunting in the woods near Luisburg, he stole away from the rest of the party, and, laying spurs to his horse, rode at full speed in the direction of Ahlden. His suite, missing the Prince and guessing his intention, gave pursuit, and eventually caught him up in a wood near Reitlagen, some four miles from the castle. Another version says that the Prince managed to get as far as Ahlden, and actually beheld his mother, who waved to him from the window. The Governor of the castle refused him admission, and he then sought to gain an entrance by swimming across the Aller. In either case his suite followed him, and, on his refusing to return, conducted the Prince back to Hanover under compulsion.

His escapade was visited by the Elector's heavy displeasure, and the young George's partisanship of his mother was probably the beginning of bad

[1] *Lord Hervey's Memoirs*, vol. ii.

blood between father and son, for they were frequently quarrelling, and came to hate one another with an intense hatred. "*Il est fougeux, mais il a du cœur*," said the Elector George once of his son, and certainly his effort to see his mother would seem to bear out his father's estimate of his character.

In April, 1700, events took a turn, which, under favourable circumstances, might have resulted in the Princess's liberty, and actually gained her the one respite in her thirty-two years' captivity. The fall of the Principality of Ahlfeld, and the nearness of the French troops to Ahlden, gave the Duchess of Celle the opportunity she was longing for, and she implored her husband to bring the Princess to Celle, where she would be out of danger. It was a pretext merely, for there was no real danger, and even if there had been, Sophie Dorothea would doubtless have been glad for the French to have broken into her prison house and have taken her as a captive of war. It would at least have varied the monotony of her existence, and the change might have been for the better; it could hardly have been for the worse.

Despite difficulties raised by Bernstorff and the Elector George, George William was prevailed upon to grant his wife's prayer; but he had to stipulate that his daughter should be confined to one wing of the Castle of Celle, and he refused to see her. So one April day the gates of Ahlden were thrown open, and the Princess was escorted over the moorland to Celle. Every care was taken to prevent a popular

PRINCE GEORGE AUGUSTUS OF HANOVER. [*To face p.* 598.

(Later George II. of England.)

demonstration. She arrived in the dead of the night, and was conducted at once to her apartments in the old part of the Schloss, which she had occupied as a child and during her unhappy married life on her visits to her parents. Here the Princess remained for nearly a year, a prisoner in her father's house, studiously avoiding any breach of the rules laid down, and seeking by good behaviour to soften the hearts of her gaolers. The possibility of any danger from the French soon passed away. Still the Princess lingered at Celle, and though orders came from Hanover that she was to be sent back to Ahlden they were not obeyed. The Duchess intervened, and sometimes on the plea of ill-health and sometimes on other pretexts she kept her daughter with her.

At last, however, the pressure from Hanover was so strong that the Princess was forced to leave Celle without having spoken to her father, though she had been nearly a year under his roof. She returned to Ahlden, and her one golden chance of liberty was gone for ever. The good folk of Celle were loud in favour of their beloved Princess, and got up noisy demonstrations; but all to no purpose. Nothing availed against the pitiless hatred of the Elector George and the Electress Sophia.

The following extracts from letters written by the Duchess d'Orleans to the Electress Sophia bear upon this incident:

July 29, 1700.—"The Duchess of Celle has lost no time in having her daughter brought to Celle.

I should think that her father must be very much embarrassed about the matter, for it will grieve him to send his daughter away again without seeing her, and yet the honour of the House does not permit him to let her remain at Celle, and there is the fear that the Elector would take it ill."

August 8, 1700.—"I should like to know if the Elector will allow the Duchess of Ahlden to remain at Celle or if he will send her back to Ahlden again. I hear that the Princess leads a very solitary life, but all the same she is splendidly dressed, and when she takes a walk on the ramparts at Celle she always covers her face with a veil. I fancy she hopes to touch the heart of her husband by her decorous life, so that he may take her as his wife again."

August 26, 1700.—"I hear that the Duchess of Celle has received orders to send her daughter back to Ahlden, but they have not been carried out. The people of Celle are not to be blamed for lamenting on account of their Princess, but her father deserves praise for exhibiting such firmness."

While the Princess was at Celle an event occurred in England pregnant with consequences to the future of the House of Hanover, and it might perhaps have contributed indirectly to the Elector's determination to send his wife back to Ahlden. The heir-presumptive to the Throne of England, Anne's sickly little son, the Duke of Gloucester, died in July, 1700. Henceforth, for practical politics, the succession lay between the direct line of the exiled and Roman Catholic House of Stuart, and the remote line of the

Protestant House of Hanover.[1] The Hanoverian succession was viewed with little favour in England, at best it was a last resort; but the failing health of King William, the impossibility of Anne having any more children, and the determination not to restore a Roman Catholic to the throne, made it imperative that the nation should do something to settle the succession. In the autumn of 1700 the Electress Sophia, accompanied by her daughter the Electress of Brandenburg, paid a visit to King William at Loo. The ostensible reason of the Electress's visit was to gain his aid in elevating the Electorate of Brandenburg to the kingdom of Prussia (which took place a little later); but of course English people saw in it a move in the direction of Sophia's succession to the throne of England. The Electress seems to have felt, as every one felt then, that events were working in favour of the royal exiles at St. Germains; but King William, who hated Anne more than all the exiled House of Stuart put together, urged the Electress Sophia to assert herself in some way in opposition to the Princess Anne. The wily old lady discreetly declined, and even suggested that the King should come to terms with the expatriated Prince of Wales. She

[1] The next in blood, after the children of James II., was the Duchess of Savoy, daughter of Henrietta, Duchess d'Orleans (a daughter of Charles I.), and then the family of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia (daughter of James I.); but all these, save the Electress Sophia, were Roman Catholics. It is interesting to note that the lineal descendant of Charles I., through the Duchess of Savoy, is Mary, Consort of the present Prince Regent of Bavaria.

would not stand in her own light, but short of that she was a Jacobite. Her suggestion had the effect of enraging William. He turned his back on her and left for England the next day. So the Electress had to return crestfallen to Hanover.

Nevertheless William, on thinking the matter over, acted upon Sophia's hint, and, inspired by his hatred of Anne, made a formal offer to King James to adopt the young Prince of Wales, bring him over to England, and make him his successor. This policy was only possible if the Prince would change his religion; but even if he had been willing to do so, which he was not, it had no chance. The offer was rejected with scorn by King James. He would make no terms with the usurper. Stung by this contemptuous rejection, William once more took up the wild idea of making the Electress Sophia his successor to the exclusion of his detested sister-in-law Anne; but the old Electress knew that she had no chance against Anne, and was far too astute to listen to any such proposal. If it were only a question of Anne's life, Sophia, or her son, would not have long to wait, for Anne's health was notoriously bad, and her life was worth little more than William's. Foiled in this direction, the King had no alternative but to push on the Act of Parliament which settled the succession of the Crown of England on the Electress Sophia and the heirs of her body, *being Protestants*, after the death of himself and of Anne without heirs. This Act, known as the Bill of Succession, was passed by both Houses without much opposition, and became law in the summer of 1701.

QUEEN ANNE. [*To face p.* 602.

As William was desirous of gaining the support of the Elector George Louis to a grand alliance he was then meditating, he made the passing of the Act an occasion to pay special honour to the Electoral House. He dispatched Lord Macclesfield to Hanover charged with the mission of delivering a copy of the Act to the Electress Sophia, and of investing her son with the Order of the Garter. The selection of Lord Macclesfield was doubtless due to the fact that he was "some sort of a relation" of the Electress Sophia's mother, Elizabeth, daughter of James I., through whom the succession came to the House of Hanover. His mission was a curious compromise between the official and unofficial. He was not given any appellation as plenipotentiary or envoy, yet he took with him a numerous and splendid suite, including the Irish traveller, Toland, to whose lively pen we are indebted for an account of this mission.

Whatever indifference the Electress Sophia and her son may have feigned towards the splendid prospects opening out before them, it vanished when the news came that Lord Macclesfield had actually set out from England. He was met on the frontier of the Electorate by the ministers and chief officials of the Electoral Court, and escorted with great pomp to Hanover, where a reception of unparalleled magnificence was accorded to him. He and every member of his suite, down to the very valets, were treated with profuse liberality, and lodged and entertained in the most sumptuous manner. Had Macclesfield been William himself he could not have been entertained more royally.

A banquet was held over-night, and the next day, the proudest day of the Electress Sophia's life, Lord Macclesfield formally presented her with the Act of Succession and invested her son with the insignia of the Garter. The Electress Sophia gave him her portrait, surmounted by the electoral crown in diamonds, and the Elector George gave him a gold basin and ewer. The chaplain of the mission, Dr. Sandys, presented many prayer books to the Electress, which she did not use, and she rewarded him with many books in return and a gold snuff-box. All the suite were likewise given souvenirs, and they returned to England with wonderful tales of the liberality of the Hanoverian Court, which they represented as a land flowing with milk and honey.

From that day forward the little German town became the goal of many political and military adventurers from England, who turned their eyes from the setting sun of St. Germains to the rising orb of Hanover. Nor were the fair adventuresses one whit behind. Many made haste from England to Hanover with the idea of enslaving the Elector or his son, notably the beautiful Mrs. Howard, who was so poor that she cut off her beautiful hair and sold it to pay the cost of the journey. The sacrifice did not pass unrewarded, for she ultimately became Lady Suffolk and mistress of George II.

The description which Toland, writing later to the English minister in Holland, gave of these festivities may be quoted here. Speaking of the Electress Sophia he says:

"The Electress is three and seventy years old, which she bears so wonderfully well that had I not many vouchers I should not dare venture to relate it. She has ever enjoyed extraordinary health, which keeps her still very vigorous, of a cheerful countenance, and a merry disposition. She steps as firm and as erect as any young lady, has not one wrinkle in her face—which is still very agreeable—not one tooth out of her head, and reads without spectacles, as I have often seen her do, letters of a small character in the dusk of the evening. She is as great a worker as our late Queen [Mary], and you cannot turn yourself in the palace without meeting some monument of her industry, all the chairs in the presence chamber being wrought with her own hands. The ornaments of the altar in the electoral chapel are all of her work. She bestowed the same favour on the Protestant Abbey, or College, of Lockurn, with a thousand other incidents fitter for your lady to know than for yourself. She is the most constant and greatest walker I ever knew, never missing a day, if it proves fine, for one or two hours and even more in the fine garden at Herrenhausen. She perfectly tires all those of her Court who attend her in that exercise and such as have the honour to be entertained by her discourse. She has been long admired by all the learned world as a woman of incomparable knowledge in divinity, philosophy, history, and the subjects of all sorts of books, of which she has read a prodigious quantity. She speaks five languages so well that by her accent it might be a dispute which of them was her first;

they are Low Dutch, German, French, Italian, and English, which last she speaks as truly and easily as any native, which to me is a matter of amazement, whatever advantages she might have in her youth by the conversation of her mother. . . . But indeed the Electress is so entirely English in her presence, in her behaviour, in her humour, in all her inclinations, that naturally she could not miss of anything that peculiarly belongs to our land. She was ever glad to see Englishmen long before the Act of Succession; she professes to admire our form of government, and understands it mighty well. Yet she asks so many questions about families, customs, laws, and the like as sufficiently demonstrate her profound wisdom and experience. She has a deep veneration for the Church of England, without losing any affection or charity for any other sort of Protestants, and appears charmed with the moderate temper of our present Bishops and that of our learned clergy, especially for their approbation of the liberty allowed by law to Protestant Dissenters. . . . I was the first to have the honour of kneeling and kissing her hand on account of the Act of Succession, and she said among other discourse that she was afraid the nation had already repented their choice of an old woman, but she hoped that none of her posterity would give England any reason to grow weary of their dominion. I answered that the English had too well considered what they did to change their mind so soon, and they still remember they were never so happy as when they were last under a woman's government."

Making allowance for courtly flattery, it must be admitted that the Electress Sophia was a remarkable old woman; but our faith in the strict veracity of Toland is somewhat shaken when he proceeds to describe the Elector George as a "proper, middle-sized, well-proportioned man of gentle address and good appearance; but His Highness is reserved, and therefore speaks little, but judiciously. I hope," adds Toland, "that none of our countrymen will be so injudicious as to think his reservedness the effect of sullenness or pride; nor mistake that for State which really proceeds from modesty, caution, and deliberation." This is bad enough, but our belief is still more tried when he goes on to describe the two hideous mistresses of this Hanoverian Solomon —Madame Kielmansegge as a "woman of sense and wit," and Madame Schulenburg as "especially worthy of the rank she enjoys, and in the opinion of others as well as myself a lady of extraordinary merit." After this there is nothing more to be said!

Of poor Sophie Dorothea, who had now gone back to her dreary captivity at Ahlden, Toland has not a word to say, though he must have known of her existence; nor had she, "the genuine wife," as Horace Walpole calls her, any share in her husband's new and growing honours.

Soon after the delivery of the Act of Succession old King James died at St. Germains, and his son declared himself determined to walk in his father's faith, which was all in favour of the Hanoverian succession and the Electress Sophia. England and

English affairs now absorbed her wholly, and she had neither time nor inclination to think about Sophie Dorothea. The Duchess of Celle kept up an agitation in her daughter's favour, but the Electoral Court was inflated with its English prospects and took no heed. Nothing was gained that affected the principle of the agreement arranged before the divorce. We find the Duchess d'Orleans writing to her aunt:

December 24, 1702.—"As the Duchess of Ahlden often sees her mother and other ladies, and can also go for drives, she is not so much to be pitied."

And this was doubtless the view of the Electress Sophia, who would have kept her even a closer prisoner if she could.

The death of William III. and the accession of Anne to the throne of England brought the Electress Sophia one step nearer to her coveted goal, and she became "the heiress of Great Britain," as she loved to describe herself. But Anne had no love for her "heiress" and kept her at arm's length. The Duchess of Celle, who had heard of Anne's dislike of her Hanoverian relatives and of her kindness of heart, seized the opportunity to place the sad case of her daughter before the powerful Queen of England. She wrote beseeching her to use her influence on behalf of the imprisoned Princess.[1] After some time an answer came—what it was history sayeth not. It is probable that Queen Anne did not send

[1] The letter dated September 20, 1702, is said to be in the State Paper Office, but I cannot find it, though mention is made by Cresset of a letter from the Duchess of Celle to Queen Anne, and he writes to the Foreign Minister at home for an answer.

an absolute refusal, but promised to give the matter her consideration. This promise, it would seem, she kept, and she did what she could, for we find the Duchess d'Orleans writing two years afterwards to the Electress Sophia :

November 30, 1704.—"They say in Paris Lord Marlborough intends to travel to Hanover and do his best to bring about a reconciliation between the Duchess of Ahlden and the Elector, and he proposes to offer his daughter in marriage to the Prince [George Augustus]."

If Marlborough really undertook this delicate mission, it had little or no effect. The Princess would not have bought her liberty at the price of cohabiting again with her husband, and it may be doubted if the Elector would have had her back on any terms. With two natures so stubborn even the diplomacy of Marlborough could have effected nothing.

The following year, 1705, the Princess's chances of liberty received what must be considered their final blow in the death of her father. Of late years the old Duke had manifested considerable interest in his daughter, and had talked of going to see her ; but Bernstorff had thrown such obstacles in the way, and had drawn such a picture of the Electoral displeasure and the difficulties which this meeting would surely create with Hanover, that the ease-loving Duke gave way and postponed his visit. But he returned to the subject ever and anon, and that his heart had softened towards his only child is manifest from a

codicil which he added to his will dated January 26, 1705, which materially benefited the Princess, and made her the residuary legatee of his large fortune. The same day the Duchess of Celle also made a will, with the approval of her husband, which provided that the "Duchess of Ahlden" should inherit at her death a sum of sixty thousand thalers deposited in the banks of the Hague and Amsterdam, also the estate of Olbreuse in Poitou, the mansion of Wienhausen, and all her jewellery, furniture, and plate. She also left her an income of three thousand thalers a year from another estate.

The combined effect of these wills was to make the prisoner of Ahlden one of the richest heiresses in Europe. Both her father and her mother must have had in mind her eventual liberty, as it would have been a mere mockery to have left her this wealth and have kept her shut up in Ahlden, where she could not spend it, and where her income was already in excess of her needs. The old Duke at last seemed determined to do what he could to repair the injustice done to his daughter, and when the wills were signed he announced his determination of going to see her. He was now in his seventieth year and his strength was fast failing; he wished to be reconciled to his only child before he died. This natural and laudable desire Bernstorff opposed as long as he dared, but seeing the Duke's mind was made up, he changed his tactics and merely advised him to postpone his visit until after a shooting expedition on which he was bent. The

delay, as the minister hoped, proved fatal; the Duke caught a chill, which he tried to remedy by taking the waters of Wienhausen, and he followed this drastic cure even after he had taken to his bed. Poley, who had now succeeded Cresset as English envoy, writes:

"That which contributed to his distemper was the taking the waters in bed, and, being in a sweat, he was so impatient as to rise in his shirt and open the windows, by which he got a great cold, which threw him into the colik and took away his stomach. . . . I forgot to mention y^e^ worse symptoms which attended y^e^ Duke of Zelle's distemper in the beginning was a hyccop, which continues, and he vomits all he takes." [1]

The "hyccop" proved fatal. The Duke died ten days later, and was universally mourned by his subjects. He was of a singularly upright and straightforward character, always a true friend, generous and kind-hearted; but he was irresolute and easily swayed, and possessed that vein of obstinacy often found in weak characters. On this weakness the wily Bernstorff played to the great benefit of Hanover and to the detriment of the Duchess of Celle and her daughter. Bernstorff was now rewarded for his breach of trust by being raised to the rank of Count, and a little later he succeeded old Platen as confidential minister to the Elector of Hanover.

The death of the Duke of Celle left his widow and daughter at the mercy of their implacable foe

[1] Poley's *Despatch*, Hanover, August 18, 1705.

the Elector. The Duchess Eléonore could expect no consideration, and her daughter no justice, from their enemies at Hanover. With indecent haste the widow was ordered to quit the Castle of Celle and withdraw to Wienhausen, which had been provided for her under her husband's will. The whole of the territory of Celle now became merged with that of Hanover under the Elector George, whose power and dignity were greatly enhanced thereby; but the "genuine wife," through whom all this wealth came, was still kept a prisoner at Ahlden, and to her prayers and entreaties for freedom her husband turned a deaf ear. All Sophie Dorothea now asked was that she might be allowed to go and live somewhere quietly with her widowed mother, and permission afforded her to see her children. Both requests were refused. It has been stated that George greatly increased the rigours of the Princess's imprisonment after her father's death; there exists no proof of this, but he may have cut her off from attending public worship in the parish church and have limited her drives. Her mother was still allowed to visit her and did so until her death, but no new concessions, not even the most trifling, were accorded. The Elector took his stand on the agreement arrived at before the divorce between his father and his uncle, and it was rigidly maintained. The Princess might as well have pleaded to a stone.

The same year that witnessed the death of Duke George William saw also the decease of two of the enemies of Sophie Dorothea. Sophia Charlotte,

Queen of Prussia, better known in this book as the Electress of Brandenburg, expired suddenly when on a visit to Hanover. Some say she passed away with an epigram on her lips, and others that she departed in the true faith of a Christian. With such a conflict of testimony, who shall say? She had been brought up "of no religion as yet," and she probably died in the same frame of mind. Her aged mother mourned her greatly.

A month later the Countess Platen died. Her last years had been rendered a torment by a disease which made her hideous to behold and deprived her of sight. But, blind though she was, she nevertheless, as Thackeray says, "constantly saw Königsmarck's ghost by her wicked old bed." She suffered torments of remorse for her share in his death, and it is said that she made a confession on her deathbed of the part she had played in his murder. A document purporting to come from her confessor has been published, but there is no proof of its genuineness.

The bells at Hanover had scarcely ceased tolling for the Duke of Celle's death, than they rang out a merry peal for the marriage of Sophie Dorothea's son, George Augustus, to Caroline of Anspach, afterwards the famous Queen Caroline of England. The young Princess had been brought up at the Court of Berlin under the wing of the Queen of Prussia. She was beautiful, witty, and clever, and early sided with her husband against his father; but there is nothing to show that she took the part of his persecuted mother. The marriage of her son affected

in no way the fortunes of Sophie Dorothea, nor was the event officially communicated to her. She was not even allowed to send him her good wishes on his marriage.

About this time the English envoy, Poley, was recalled, and he sent home an interesting document,[1] in which he gives a detailed account of the Electoral family of Hanover. It is, of course, written with a courtly pen, with a view to possible eventualities, and the description which he gives of the Electress Sophia and the Elector, though more moderately worded, is somewhat on the lines of that already quoted from Toland. Unlike Toland, he could not ignore the existence of the prisoner of Ahlden, and this is how he mentions her:

"The Elector was formerly married to a daughter of the Duke of Zell, by whom he had one son and one daughter, but was afterwards separated from her; since which time she hath lived at Ahlden, of which she bears the title, in the country of Zell. She hath a revenue appropriated to her, and of which is in possession, and, as some have imagined, may perhaps goe live with her mother at the town of Lüneburg, whither it is said that the Duchess-Dowager of Zell intends to retire."

The case could hardly be more diplomatically worded; the facts are correct, yet the inference they convey is wholly false. One would gather

[1] Still preserved in the State Paper Office. "Called Mr. Poley's account of the House of Brunswick, etc., upon his return from being Her Majesty's envoy at Hanover, November 9, 1705."

PRINCESS CAROLINE OF ANSPACH. [*To face p.* 614.

(*Afterwards Queen Caroline, Consort of George II.*)

from this effusion that Sophie Dorothea was living in dignified and voluntary retirement instead of being a prisoner in two small rooms, closely guarded, and watched over by gaolers and spies. The following account of her children from the same despatch is also of interest :

"The Prince Electoral was born in the year 1683, and is of middle stature, but seems of constitution less vigorous than his father. He hath much witt and good humour in his conversation, and hath all the inclinations suitable to his quality. He was lately married to a Princess of the House of Brandenburg-Anspach of the same age with himself, and of so many good qualities and endowments as may promise much happiness to the Family.

"The Princess of Hanover, daughter of the Elector, is of about eighteen years of age, and something about middle stature and well shaped. She hath much beauty and is of agreeable conversation. Her marriage hath been talked of with the King of Sweden, but I doe not know that it was ever proposed. The Prince Royall of Prussia, her couzen germane, is thought to have more inclination for her than for anybody else, but it hath been doubted if the King of Prussia would be willing to consent to that marriage."

Poley's surmise that the Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia was in love with his cousin, the young Sophie Dorothea, proved to be correct, for though he had a "choice of three" he loved her above

all others, and overcame his father's dislike to the match. They were married in November, 1706, with much ceremony, at Hanover, and soon after set out for Berlin. The lonely mother at Ahlden heard of her daughter's brilliant marriage in the same way she had heard of her son's, through her mother; but she was not allowed to communicate with her, nor was the Duchess-Dowager of Celle present at either of the weddings. To the Electoral family Eléonore had once more become "the d'Olbreuse," and was treated accordingly. Her age, her grey hairs, her bereavements, her powerlessness to do harm, made no difference to the contempt and hatred with which the Electress Sophia and her son pursued her. Her grandchildren, however, took her part, and, though they were powerless to help their mother, they protected their grandmother from open insult. The young Crown Princess of Prussia was now far away from her mother and the centre of a brilliant Court, yet the lonely captive at Ahlden contrived to enter into some sort of correspondence with her.

There was now a strong disposition on the part of the Hanoverian Court to hush up all mention of Sophie Dorothea. The time was certainly favourable: her father was dead, her mother powerless, her children married; she was without a friend on earth. Why should she not be quietly buried in her living tomb? But family skeletons are notoriously hard things to hide; they have a habit of popping out whether we will or no, and Sophie Dorothea was not a woman to be easily suppressed. She had come

to see that there was nothing to be gained by submission, and henceforth she assumed more aggressive tactics, filling the air with her cries, and beating her wings against the bars of her cage in vain endeavour for freedom. Poor woman! it was vain to cry, and she only bruised her bosom with her struggles; but one thing she achieved,—she saved herself from being forgotten by the outside world. Her mother's old friend, Duke Antony Ulrich, was especially indignant at the way she was treated after her father's death and at the Elector's refusal to allow her to go and live quietly with her mother. Animated by hatred of the House of Hanover, quite as much as by sympathy for Sophie Dorothea, he resolved to give the world the story of her wrongs. He was powerless to help her in any other way, but for this task he was peculiarly fitted. Unlike most princes of his age, he dabbled in literature and was a voluminous and ready writer, the author of prose romances, poems, and plays. He determined to turn his gifts to account by elaborating the story of his much-wronged cousin, which, indeed, would furnish material for any romance. He had been working for some time at the *Roman Octavia*, a series of episodes nominally taken from the Roman emperors, into which he had incorporated many scenes and events of his own life and times disguised by ancient names. He now devoted the sixth, or supplementary, volume to the history of Sophie Dorothea. No doubt he was aided in this by Eléonore von Knesebeck, who was then living at Wolfenbüttel.

The narrative so closely resembled what had actually happened, that every one could penetrate through the thinly veiled disguise of fictitious names and learn the story of the injured Princess. It was told in the form of dramatic dialogue, with due regard to stage effect. Duke George William appears as King Polemon of Cappadocia; his Duchess is Dinames, a Spanish Princess; Ernest Augustus is Mythridates, King of Pontus. The Electress Sophia, whom Antony Ulrich especially hated, is satirised under the name of Adonacris, "who, as the sister of the great Indian king, gave herself the airs of one of the mightiest princesses in the world." George Louis figures as Prince Cotys, a dull and brutal youth; while Sophie Dorothea appears as the Princess Solane, who for beauty and riches had no rival in Asia. Königsmarck figures as Æquilius, one of the Roman lords at the Court of the incomparable Queen Adonacris. The Princess's story is then told from the beginning: her early marriage to the man she loathed, the cruelty with which she was treated at the Court of Hanover, the appearance of Königsmarck, who had known her as a child, and his passion for her. But the Princess in the play is represented to be as virtuous as she was beautiful, and she resisted her lover's advances by every means in her power. The account of the catastrophe is consequently modified to suit the theory of the innocence of the Princess. It is stated that one of her Highness's ladies hid the cavalier in her chamber, and then sent a message to

the Princess saying that she was ill. The Princess, in compassion, came to see her, and as soon as she entered the room the lover threw himself at her feet. At this juncture the Prince, her husband, appeared on the scene with a drawn sword; the Princess swooned, and the lover was hurried away, never again to see the light. The Princess's protestations of innocence were without avail, and as appearances were against her a divorce was effected, and she was consigned to prison, where she bore her fate with dignity.

Such, in rough outline, is the story of this work, which had a great success. It was eagerly read in every Court of Europe and continued to have a large circulation far into the eighteenth century, and even in the present century has formed the unacknowledged source of many so-called "lives" of Sophie Dorothea. The lonely prisoner of Ahlden was one of the most talked-about women of her generation. The secrecy and mystery surrounding her only served to whet the public curiosity.

The Electress Sophia early obtained a copy of the *Octavia*, and so did her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans. We find her writing to her aunt:

July 25, 1708.—"I am going to read the *Octavia* over again, as George Louis has been kind enough to send me the key to it. Duke Antony Ulrich makes Solane appear innocent, but that is only done to save the honour of the House. In all matters his truth is mixed with a modicum of lies. Cotys I consider cold, but not brutal. There is no

doubt that Solane was a coquette; Lassaye has told me plenty about that, so much that I have not the slightest doubt about it. I was obliged to laugh, when Duke Christian looks on it as an improvement that she had at least stuck to *one* in particular. . . . I, however, find safety in numbers: one is dangerous, as events have proved. I should like to know if her husband has still any wish to see her, particularly as they say she is still beautiful. It would be only right for her mother to keep her company, for her bad upbringing is the cause of all the daughter's misfortunes."

On this string, the bad upbringing, the Duchess is always harping. Still, as the years went on, even she could not forbear some pity for the imprisoned woman. We find the following allusions in her letters to her aunt, and they are about the only authentic record we have of Sophie Dorothea during these years:

October 27, 1709.—"It must grieve the Princess deeply to know that her children are so near and not to be able to see them; I really feel sorry for her. I should like to know if her children have any desire to see her."

But apparently she repents of this pity, for the next year we find this:

May 8, 1710.—"That the Princess always sits before her looking-glass may be excused her, and proves that her nature is to coquette."

Two years later the correspondence between these two remarkable women ceased for ever—the Electress Sophia was dead. She died within sight of her

promised land. It chanced in this wise. Since the Act of Succession, and more especially since the accession of Queen Anne, the Hanoverian family had watched with keener and more personal interest the progress of events in England. The Queen had created the Elector George a Duke of the Blood Royal, and had given him precedence over the entire peerage, and the name of the Electress Sophia had been inserted in the Church prayers. Later the Electoral Prince, George Augustus, was created Duke of Cambridge. But this was the extent of Queen Anne's recognition. She was exceedingly jealous of her Hanoverian relations, and she especially disliked her old wooer, the Elector George. It would seem that in her heart she yearned after her brother, the exiled Prince of Wales; but she was so vacillating, and withal so timid, that it was impossible to say what she really wished or did not wish, and it may be doubted whether she knew herself. The party in England which upheld the Protestant succession had many agents at the Hanoverian Court. As Queen Anne's health grew weaker and her favour for her brother stronger, this party became much alarmed, and repeatedly urged the advisability of the Electress Sophia or her heirs making themselves known to the people of England. But the Electress could hardly go to England during Queen Anne's lifetime without the Queen's invitation, though she was "the heiress of Great Britain." She was very old, and reluctant to move from her beloved Herrenhausen unless she should be summoned to England

as Queen. But she was strongly in favour of her son or grandson going, and her supporters in England were equally desirous. They petitioned the Elector to come over and take his seat in the House of Lords, or, if he could not come, at least the Electoral Prince, George Augustus, might pay a visit to England. The Whigs were ready to organise demonstrations in favour of the House of Hanover, and the Elector and Electoral Prince expressed themselves as willing to go. The aged Electress Sophia set her heart upon it above all things. The desire of long years seemed near fruition; the visit of her son or grandson to the Court of England would be the outward sign and symbol of what she most yearned for. "I care not when I die, if on my tomb it be recorded that I was Queen of Great Britain and Ireland," said this dauntless old woman of eighty; and, despite her advanced age, there seemed a likely prospect of her wish being granted, for her health was better than Anne's. This remark was repeated to the Queen, and greatly incensed her against the Electress Sophia. A scribbler named d'Urfey, wishing to curry favour with his Royal mistress, wrote the following doggerel:

The crown's far too weighty
For shoulders of eighty,
She could not sustain such a trophy.
Her hand, too, already
Has grown so unsteady
She could not hold a sceptre.
So Providence kept her
Away. Poor old Dowager Sophy!

For this effusion d'Urfey received a fee of fifty guineas from Anne. When the news of the proposed Hanoverian visit reached the Queen's ears, she was beside herself with rage. It seemed to her an attempt to snatch the crown from her grasp before she was dead, and to force her hand in the matter of the succession. Like a true Stuart, whatever Parliament might say or do, she always felt the crown of England was her own peculiar possession, to bestow upon whom she would. As long as she lived she was determined that no Hanoverian prince should set foot in her dominions. She therefore sat down and penned strongly worded letters to the Electress Sophia and the Elector George Louis. Her letter to the Electress Sophia ran as follows :

To the Electress-Dowager of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

"Madame, Sister, Aunt,—Since the right of succession to my kingdom has been declared to belong to you and your family, there have always been disaffected persons who, by particular views of their own interest, have entered into measures to fix a prince of your blood in my dominions even whilst I am yet living. I never thought till now that this project would have gone so far as to have made the least impression on your mind ; but as I have lately perceived by public rumours, which are industriously spread, that Your Electoral Highness is come into this sentiment, it is important with respect to the succession of your family that I should tell you such a proceeding will infallibly draw along

with it some consequence that will be dangerous to the succession itself, which is not secure any other wise than as the Prince, who actually wears the crown, maintains her authority and prerogative. There are here—such is our misfortune—a great many people that are seditiously disposed ; so I leave you to judge what tumults they may be able to raise if they should have a pretext to begin a commotion. I persuade myself, therefore, you will never consent that the least thing should be done that may disturb the repose of me or my subjects.

"Open yourself with the same freedom that I do to you, and propose whatever you think may contribute to the security of the succession. I will go into it with zeal, provided that it did not derogate from my dignity, which I am resolved to maintain.

"I am, with a great deal of affection, etc.

"Anne R.

"*May* 19, 1714."

The Queen's letter to the Elector George was shorter, but equally to the point. She told him plainly that nothing could be more dangerous to the interests of the Hanoverian succession than the idea of himself or his son coming to her dominions, and nothing could be more disagreeable to herself.

These letters reached Hanover a week later, and proved fatal to the Electress Sophia. When she received the Queen's peremptory letter she not only lost her cherished hope, but also her temper. She was well stricken in years and could ill bear agitation of such a kind. A few days after the letters arrived

STATUE OF THE ELECTRESS SOPHIA. [*To face p.* 624.

(*Erected in the gardens of Herrenhausen, on the spot where she died.*)

she was dead. Mollineux, who was an agent of the Duke of Marlborough at Hanover, gives the following account of her end :

"I ran up there [*i.e.* the garden at Herrenhausen] and found her fast expiring in the arms of the poor Electoral Princess, and amidst the tears of a great many of her servants, who endeavoured in vain to help. I can give you no account of her illness, but that I believe the shock of those villainous letters I sent you last post has been in a great measure the cause of it. The Rheingravine, who has been with her this fifteen years, told me she never knew anything make so deep an impression on her as the affair of the Prince's journey, which I am sure she had to the last degree at heart, and she has done me the honour to tell me so twenty times. In the midst of this, however, these letters arrived, and these I verily believe have broken her heart and brought her with sorrow to the grave.

"The letters were delivered on Wednesday at seven. When I came to Court she was at cards. She was so full of these letters that she got up and ordered me to follow her into the garden, where she gave them to me to read, and walked and spoke a good deal in relation to them. I believe she walked three hours that night. The next morning, which was Thursday, I heard that she was out of order, and on going immediately to Court, she ordered me to be called into her bedchamber. She gave me the letters (I sent you to copy); she bade me send them next post, and bring them to her to Court.

This was on Friday in the morning. On Friday they told me she was very well, but seemed much chagrined. She was dressed, and dined with the Elector as usual. At four she did me the honour to send to town for some other copies of the same letters. Then she was still perfectly well. She walked and talked very hurriedly in the Orangery. After that, about six, she went out to walk in the garden. A shower of rain came on, and as she was walking pretty fast to get to shelter, they told her she was walking a little too fast. She answered, 'I believe I do,' and dropped down on saying these words, which were her last. They raised her up, chaffed her with spirits, tried to bleed her; but it was all in vain, and when I came up she was as dead as if she had been four days so."

The Electress Sophia died on June 10, 1714, Queen Anne on the following September 1, so the Electress Sophia missed being Queen of England by a little more than two months, and died with the desire of her heart ungratified. Perhaps this was a retribution on her for her harshness to her unhappy daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CROWN AND GRAVE

(1714—1726)

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust.

TENNYSON, *Maud.*

A FEW hours after Queen Anne breathed her last the Elector of Hanover was proclaimed in London as George I. King of Great Britain and Ireland as quietly as if he had been undisputed heir to the throne, and Lord Berkeley was sent with a fleet to Orange Polder, in Holland, to bring over the new King. The news was speedily conveyed to Hanover; but George received it without enthusiasm, and showed no haste to enter upon his inheritance. Unlike his mother, he had neither sought nor coveted the English crown; as it was thrust upon him, he took it, and made the most of it for the benefit of his beloved Hanover. When he at last set out for his new dominion he took with him a horde of Hanoverian parasites, and two hideous old women, one his mistress, Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg, and the other Madame

Kielmansegge, a daughter of Countess Platen, but whether the King's mistress, or half-sister, or both, must ever remain a mystery. Schulenburg was even more reluctant than her beloved George to go to England; she desired nothing more than a quiet life and a comfortable pension in Hanover. England, she said, was a place where they used their kings barbarously, and might even chop her George's head off in the first fortnight. She besought him with tears not to go, or, at any rate, to leave her at home. But George reassured her by saying grimly, "All the king-killers are on my side," and promised much gold and many dignities if she would follow him to the land of promise. So, grumbling, she packed up her trunks and trundled off with him. She was now fifty-five years of age, extraordinarily tall and lean; her skin hung loosely on her fleshless bones, her cheeks were ruddled with rouge, and she habitually dressed in glaring and discordant colours. The other lady, Madame Kielmansegge, was unable to leave Hanover the same day as the King owing to her debts, which he was too niggardly to pay; but she managed to avoid her creditors and caught up the Royal traveller at the Hague. If we may believe Horace Walpole's well-known account, she was even less attractive than Schulenburg.

"Lady Darlington,"[1] he says, "whom I saw at my mother's in my infancy, and whom I remember by being terrified at her enormous figure, was as

[1] The title given her by the King.

corpulent and ample as the Duchess[1] was long and emaciated. Two fierce black eyes, large and rolling, between two lofty eyebrows, two acres of cheeks spread with crimson, an ocean of neck that overflowed and was not distinguished from the lower part of her body, and no part restrained by stays—no wonder that a child dreaded such an ogress!"

Accompanied by these two favourites, King George set sail from Orange Polder, where the English fleet was waiting, and landed two days later at Greenwich. He was not left stranded on the mud this time, as in the days of his former visit when he came a-courting the Lady Anne of York. A servile crowd of place-hunters was now awaiting him, whose fervent expressions of loyalty he rated for what they were worth. Two days later the King made his public entry into London. His heavy, ungainly presence and ungracious manner did not impress the populace favourably; but their dislike changed to derision when they saw the two hideous mistresses by whom he was accompanied, and they relieved their feelings by hoots and yells. At this Schulenburg, who had picked up a little English in her youth, thrust her head out of the window of the coach and cried:

"Goot people, why you abuse us?—we come for all your goots."

"Yes, damn ye!" answered a fellow in the crowd, "and for all our chattels, too."

So entered into his kingdom the first of our Hanoverian Sovereigns.

[1] The Duchess of Kendal (Schulenburg).

In her lonely Castle of Ahlden Sophie Dorothea heard of the splendid heritage of the English crown; but she had no regrets on that score, all she grieved for was her loss of liberty. The accession of George I. made no difference to her lot; she was still kept in durance vile, still styled Duchess of Ahlden, and refused the rank and title of Queen as she had been refused the rank and title of Electress. Yet she was *de jure*, if not *de facto*, queen consort of George I., albeit a disowned and uncrowned one, as Caroline of Brunswick was, nearly a century later, the uncrowned consort of George IV. There seems little authority for the statement made by Doran and others that, previous to the King's departure for England, he made overtures through a confidential minister to his imprisoned wife for a reconciliation, and on this and other occasions he was met by her words: "If I am guilty I am not worthy of him; if I am innocent he is not worthy of me." It is also said that she stipulated, as a preliminary, for a public apology and perfect freedom, and as this was refused negotiations broke down. But in the face of other evidence it seems unlikely that the King would have entered upon such negotiations at all. He had never shown the least wish to have his wife back again, and she had always declared her determination never to return to conjugal relations with him on any pretext whatever; it may be doubted if the prospect of becoming Queen Consort of England would have been sufficiently dazzling to have tempted her to rejoin him.

Viewed as a matter of policy, it would have been

KING GEORGE I. [*To face p.* 630.

a good thing if George I. could have taken his wife to England with him. Though now well advanced in middle life (Sophie Dorothea was nearly fifty years of age and had been imprisoned twenty years), she was still beautiful, and her many accomplishments, her grace and dignity, would have lent a charm to the dull Court of St. James' and have helped to popularise the Hanoverian *régime*. But Sophie Dorothea had never shown herself *une femme complaisante*, and would most surely have objected to the harem which accompanied her husband to England. Knowing this, George I. doubtless thought it better to keep his wife shut up in Ahlden than to embark upon any hazardous scheme of reconciliation. His hands were full enough of domestic worries without being troubled with any more. His quarrels and bickerings with the Prince of Wales were matters of common notoriety, and reflected little credit on the dynasty; so every effort was made to keep the other family scandal hidden from his English subjects. Some of the Hanoverian suite who accompanied the King to England gave out that His Majesty was a widower; others that his wife was mad; and others that she was a Papist; but the Jacobites ferreted out the truth, and did not scruple to make the most of it.

The harshness with which the King treated his Consort formed the favourite indictment against him, and was always brought up at popular demonstrations, as, for instance, on the anniversary of the death of Queen Anne, until the end of his reign. The story of Sophie Dorothea's hardships and misery in her

mysterious castle was greatly exaggerated, and any allusion to the subject was resented by the King, who was especially sensitive on this score. He even thought it possible that his wife might escape from her prison, come over to England, and proclaim the story of her wrongs; so when he left Hanover he gave orders that she was to be guarded more closely than ever. This espionage was accompanied by extraordinary care for her health; the most loving husband could not have been more solicitous. In addition to her resident doctor at Ahlden, court physicians from Hanover visited the captive at stated intervals and made reports. This solicitude arose, not from regard, but from superstition. "It is known," writes Walpole, "that in Queen Anne's time there was much noise about the French prophets, and it certainly was a most superstitious age. One of this company, a prophetess Deborah, who was much esteemed for her prophetic gifts, once came to Hanover and told King George, who was then Elector, to take every care of his wife, as he would certainly not survive her twelve months."

Like all Germans, George I. was very superstitious, and Madame Schulenburg was even more so; so orders were given that everything should be done to keep the prisoner at Ahlden in good health. To this she probably owed what liberty she possessed, including her daily drives. The reports which reached her tyrant from time to time were reassuring, for the captive enjoyed the best of health, to which her regular life no doubt contributed.

Her one grievance now was her imprisonment, against which, during the whole of her residence at Ahlden, she did not cease to protest and struggle. Time only intensified her desire for freedom. Short of this she bore her lot with fortitude and resignation, and even her enemies gave grudging testimony to the admirable way in which she ordered her life. The daily round, weary and monotonous though it was, brought little duties which she never neglected. Her household and estates were admirably managed, and in the country around the poor rose up and called her blessed. When the village of Ahlden was burnt down in 1715 she rebuilt it at her own expense, and widened the view from the castle. She derived great comfort from the consolations of religion, and every Sunday she took the sacrament in the presence of her household, and prayed God to forgive her enemies and turn their hearts. Even against her arch-enemy, her husband, she at this time said nothing. The only ray of light in her gloom were the visits of her mother, who, despite her advanced age and increasing infirmities, still came from Wienhausen to see her beloved daughter as often as she was permitted to do so. She also found relief in her literary labours; she was always a graceful and ready writer, and in her later years she cultivated this faculty to her utmost. She wrote her memoirs in the hope that they would be permitted to see the light; but they were never given to the world, though many spurious imitations have been foisted on the public. It is believed also that romance and poetry flowed from

her pen ; reams and reams of paper were covered by her handwriting, and boxes and boxes of manuscripts accumulated at Ahlden during the long years of her captivity, most of them circling around the tale of her own sad lot, and chiefly written with a view to setting herself right with the world. All these papers were ultimately suppressed, burned, or otherwise destroyed by order of the Hanoverian government, and, save for a few scattered fragments of little value, nothing has been left ; her literary labours were as vain as the labours of Sisyphus. When she first came to Ahlden she carried on an extensive correspondence with friends and acquaintances, but it had gradually thinned by death. She still, however, wrote and received many letters, many of them quite openly, some in secret. Of the latter, the most important was her correspondence with her daughter, the Queen of Prussia.

Soon after the young Princess's marriage the King of Prussia died, and on her husband's accession she became the second Queen of Prussia. One of her first acts was to take into her service the faithful Eléonore Knesebeck, who until this time had been living at Brunswick and Wolfenbüttel. From Knesebeck the Queen learned the story of the captive's wrongs. Her heart had always yearned to her imprisoned mother, and, moved to fresh pity by the recital of Knesebeck, she determined to do what she could to ameliorate her lot. Under the seal of secrecy she opened up a correspondence with the prisoner of Ahlden. As this was contrary

to the orders of both the King of Prussia and the King of England, it was necessary to surround it with extraordinary precautions. For several years mother and daughter managed to keep up a frequent correspondence, which was maintained chiefly through the Count de Bar, who, since the death of the Duke of Celle, had acted as Sophie Dorothea's man of business, and looked after her money matters ; Ludwig, a Privy Councillor at Berlin, Frederick, one of the Queen of Prussia's pages, and Ludemann, a bailiff at Ahlden also assisted. Many communications passed between mother and daughter, not only on private matters, but on public affairs ; the mother always imploring her daughter to aid her to gain her liberty, the daughter always promising to do her best, counselling patience, and sending from time to time little gifts to mark her good will. The King of Prussia soon got to know what was going on, but he discreetly shut his eyes for reasons of his own. He knew that his mother-in-law was possessed of a large property entirely under her control, and was also heiress to another. At her death she would leave her daughter a substantial share, if not the whole, and she was therefore a person to be humoured. The Queen of Prussia knew this, too, and subsequent events seem to show that this knowledge was not without its influence on her display of filial affection. But the poor lady at Ahlden believed her daughter's solicitude to be all born of love, and she gave back the love fourfold. She was of a warm-hearted, affectionate, and impulsive disposition, a nature years

of solitude and misery had neither warped nor soured.

King George would have been very angry if he had known of this correspondence; but he was now chiefly in England, and he tried to forget the very existence of his wife.

Far away from Ahlden, he was acquitting himself after his manner in his new dominions. He loved not England; he never troubled to learn the language, nor to make himself acquainted with the laws and customs of the country over which he was called to reign. He left all government in the hands of his ministers, made them responsible, and directed his energies to plundering England for the benefit of his beloved Hanover. His favourite ladies followed suit, and their greed and unloveliness gave rise to the grossest lampoons. Schulenburg was nicknamed "The Maypole," and Kielmansegge "The Elephant," and rude cartoons were sold in the gutters and purlieus of the city of London.

One scribbler wrote: "We are being ruined by trulls—nay, what is more vexatious, by old ugly trulls, such as could not find entertainment, in the most hospitable hundreds of old Drury." This libel formed a subject of debate in the House of Commons, and was punished with imprisonment and fine. Nevertheless the charge was true: the ugliness of these ladies was undeniable, their morals were not above reproach, and their rapacity was beyond conception. Like their master, they seemed to regard England as a temporary possession, to be made the most of

while it lasted, and they grabbed everything they could lay hold of, even Queen Anne's jewels; they appropriated places and pensions, and sold their real or supposed influence with the King for enormous sums. As a reward for their complaisance in following him to England, King George had settled on them large incomes, and lodged them in St. James' Palace. He created Schulenburg Duchess of Kendal, and Kielmansegge Countess of Darlington. These, then, were the ladies who graced the Court of St. James' under George I. Never had England seen more avaricious favourites, not even in the worst days of the Stuarts. Charles II. had his mistresses, numerous and extravagant enough in all truth, but they were beautiful, as Lady Castlemaine, or witty, as the Duchess of Portsmouth, or good-natured, like Nell Gwynne. But the "Elephant" and the "Maypole" were not as these; they represented vice in all its ugliness. Even in their failings the Stuarts were picturesque, and invested their wrongdoing with a certain splendour and refinement. But what can be said in defence of the Court of our first Hanoverian Sovereign? how palliate its utter grossness, its ugliness, meanness, and avarice? And as George I. began his reign so it continued to the end: the English Court, if Court it could be called, had never sunk so low. The palace of St. James' became a focus of shameless immorality and sordid corruption, and to it all was added the bitterness of a family feud. The father hated the son, and the son hated the father; the

ministers hated the mistresses, and the mistresses hated the ministers. All was, in short, hatred, falsehood, and intrigue; the worst passions of human nature were fostered in this fœtid atmosphere. Such was the reign of the first George, and such was the man who sat in judgment on his wife, and doomed her to lifelong imprisonment because, in her youth, she had loved one man, not wisely, but too well. Faugh! the air stifles us, let us open the windows and away.

Back again to Ahlden, back to the lonely castle on the desolate heath, over which the wind swept shrilly. Yet, shrill and biting though it was, it at least had no taint of the poisonous breath of St. James'. Back again to the poor prisoner of nearly thirty years, eating her heart out in loneliness and woe, praying daily for the deliverance that never came. Let us hasten quickly: it is our last journey.

Early in 1722 Sophie Dorothea lost the one being whom she could trust in the world, the mother whose love had never failed her, and who, in the darkest hour, sought to protect her interests and defend her good name against all the world. Since her husband's death the Duchess of Celle, though grudgingly accorded the outward honours due to her rank, had been subject to many petty insults and annoyances from the Hanoverian government, which she suffered uncomplainingly.

Up to a short time of her death the Duchess Eléonore was regular in her visits to her daughter. Her cheerful presence came as the one gleam of

sunshine in the darkness of Ahlden ; she was never tired of preaching resignation and of holding out the hope of a brighter future. One of her last acts was to again make her will in favour of her daughter, securing to her more firmly all the property she possessed, with the exception of a substantial life income which she bequeathed to her old friend Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. As soon as she had settled her earthly affairs the Duchess grew much weaker, and was warned that her end was near ; but, weak and ailing though she was, she rose from her bed and made a supreme effort to visit her daughter once more. She journeyed to Ahlden, and had her last interview with the unhappy captive, and gave her her blessing. Mother and daughter parted with tears, fully persuaded they would never meet again. Their forebodings were soon realised, for when the Duchess reached home she returned to her bed, from which she never rose again. She was buried in the ducal vaults of Celle next her husband, but the vacant niche for her statue in the chancel above has never been filled,—another instance of the meanness of George I., who carried his vindictiveness even beyond the grave.

The Courts of England, Hanover, and Berlin decreed mourning as in duty bound, and in this the "Duchess of Ahlden" was permitted to join. Previously she had received no official notification of the mournings and rejoicings in her family, not even of her father's death and her children's marriages.

Sophie Dorothea had reason enough to mourn, God knows: she had lost her one true friend on earth,

and there seemed no prospect for her but to live on, uncared for, at the mercy of the relentless tyrant, her husband. Her fortitude of years began to give way, and in despair she meditated wild plans of escape, and set aside large sums of money to this end. But, alas! the very people she trusted took her gold with one hand and betrayed her with the other. For a little time she was not without hope. Her son-in-law, King Frederick of Prussia, seemed interested in her cause; but his interest proved purely selfish. He was absolutely indifferent as to what became of his wife's mother, but was exceedingly interested in her fortune, which had been largely augmented by the death of the Duchess of Celle. He employed an agent in Hanover to discover exactly how matters stood and what share his wife would inherit from her mother. These inquiries gave great umbrage to King George. But they need not have done so, for when the King of Prussia discovered that his Queen would possess at least half her mother's fortune he no longer paid the captive of Ahlden the least consideration, and ordered his wife to discontinue her correspondence with her mother. Nevertheless, communications continued to pass between Ahlden and Berlin, though under greater secrecy than before. The Count de Bar, who was indeed a traitor of the deepest dye, was suspected by the Queen of Prussia, and she repeatedly warned her mother against him; but Sophie Dorothea clung to him to the very last.

One fertile subject of correspondence between

THE QUEEN OF PRUSSIA. [*To face p.* 640.

(*Daughter of Sophie Dorothea and George I.*)

mother and daughter was on what was called the "double marriage scheme" between Sophie Dorothea's grandchildren—namely, the marriage of Frederick, son of the Prince of Wales, to Wilhelmina, daughter of the King and Queen of Prussia, and of their son Fritz, afterwards Frederick the Great, to Amelia, second daughter of the Prince of Wales. This double marriage was a darling project of the Queen of Prussia, cherished by her almost from the time the children were born. She was supported by her father, the King of England, but opposed by her husband, the King of Prussia. The "Duchess of Ahlden" opposed it, too, and instructed her agent at Berlin to work against the scheme, though how it could have made any difference to her passes imagination. This opposition so incensed the Queen of Prussia that she sent word to her mother to the effect that when the marriage scheme was an accomplished fact she would work her hardest to set her free, but not until then. As these marriages could not come off for years, in consequence of the youth of the Princess Amelia, this message was disheartening, and at first Sophie Dorothea would not credit it; but it is characteristic that it made no change in her opposition. There was no more to be expected from the King and Queen of Prussia. Foiled in the direction she had hoped for deliverance, she fell back again on plans of escape. From time to time she had entrusted Count de Bar with large sums of money, amounting altogether to some sixty thousand pounds, which he deposited in the Bank of Amsterdam. He afterwards appro-

priated most of this to his own use ;—but that is to anticipate. At this time Sophie Dorothea trusted him wholly, and her object in placing this money at Amsterdam was that it might come in useful to her in case she escaped from her husband's territory ; but how she thought to effect a flight from the closely guarded Castle of Ahlden it is impossible to say. In this secret flight the Count de Bar was to assist. The Queen of Prussia became aware of the project, and in much alarm entreated her mother to be patient. She again promised that she would help her as soon as her pet scheme of the double marriage was out of the way, and she asked her mother to help her to effect it. She must have meant help with money to bribe ministers and agents, for there was no other way save money in which the imprisoned Princess could be of any use. She also advised a " general amnesty," which meant that her mother should seek a reconciliation with King George, and express her willingness to submit to his terms, whatever they might be. But Sophie Dorothea had a proud spirit, which all these years of captivity could not break, and she was a difficult woman to deal with. Much as she desired her freedom, she would make no sacrifice of dignity or consistency.

In the following letter to the Count de Bar, then at Berlin, she thus expresses herself on these proposals :

"[AHLDEN], *July* 28, 1725.

" I thank God that nothing in the world, not even the most dazzling and tempting prospect, would make

the least impression upon me, or lead me into any meanness. I repeat that you are absolutely master to do as you please; but it is impossible for me ever to give my approval to a marriage scheme which would indubitably separate my daughter from my interests, and the consequences of which speak but too plainly for themselves. As to the 'general amnesty' which is deemed absolutely necessary, I told you last year what I thought on that subject. I merely add now that I have Christian sentiments, and am neither implacable nor animated with an unworthy desire of vengeance. I am far from wishing anything harsh or cruel. But it would be very mortifying to me to find myself disappointed of all satisfaction after so many outrages and insults; and this cannot be considered as a criminal revenge, but rather as a point of honour, conformable to Holy Scripture and the example of St. Paul. See the Acts of the Apostles, chap. xvi., vv. 36, 37.

"Sophie Dorothea."

There is little doubt that Sophie Dorothea was wise in refusing to part with money to advance the Queen of Prussia's marriage schemes without some adequate security that her daughter would really carry out her promise; and she was probably wise, too, in spurning the idea of a general amnesty if that involved submission to George I. and his mistresses. She would sacrifice her dignity and consistency on the one hand, and would gain nothing on the other, for it was hardly likely that the King's promises,

supposing that he made any, were to be trusted. This uncompromising attitude on her part furnished the Queen of Prussia with a further pretext for doing nothing more for her mother, and she directed her confidential agent, Frederick, to communicate, through Ludemann, the bailiff of Ahlden, "that affairs were in so bad a state that it was impossible to take any steps without making bad worse and causing more unhappiness, but that time and Providence would ameliorate everything." She also refused to receive the Count de Bar any more at Berlin, as she distrusted both his good faith and his ability. Frederick, the Queen's agent, was sent to interview Ludemann, either at Ahlden or at some place near, and to communicate to him verbally the Queen's message to her mother. Ludemann drew up a report of his conversation with Frederick, which, *inter alia*, runs as follows :

"The Queen sends her best regards to Her Highness with the strongest assurances of her entire affection, respect, and filial devotion, soliciting to maintain a place in the affections of her mother, for whom she forwards some souvenirs. She would with pleasure have written, but the circumstances in which she is placed render writing too hazardous. The least movement in Her Highness's favour cannot be made without great danger."

The Queen of Prussia's messenger went on to say that all correspondence and communications must cease

for a time. On behalf of the Queen he again denounced the Count de Bar as a dangerous traitor. Ludemann, Sophie Dorothea's agent, commented on the Queen's dislike of the Count as very strange, considering how long a time he had served Sophie Dorothea and her father before her. After considerable parley the report shows that the Queen again promises her mother that if she would only keep quiet until the affair of the double marriage was arranged she would do all she could to help her. It is clear from this that the Queen of Prussia's interest was a purely selfish one.

Sophie Dorothea was greatly dissatisfied with Ludemann's report of his interview with the Queen's agent and refused to believe much of it. She was unable to appreciate the necessity of secrecy, she refused the presents, and expressed her confidence and trust in the Count de Bar in the two following spirited memoranda to her daughter:

"AHLDEN, *August* 26, 1725.

"I have received two portraits in miniature set in gold; a gold repeater watch garnished with cornelian, with chain seal and gold hook; an *étui* of mother-of-pearl, with side garnished in like manner; and a snuff-box covered with a rare agate, which I keep till they can be returned with safety, it being neither just nor proper that I should accept them in the present juncture and circumstances—except the two portraits, which I shall retain.

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA."

"AHLDEN, *September* 5, 1725.

"In case there should be repeated at Hanover what has been said at Rhaburg concerning the Count de Bar, I declare that my firm and constant will is that the Count de Bar shall continue to act for me in my affairs as he has always done hitherto. I ought not, and I will not, prevent those, whom Heaven in its infinite mercy has been pleased to raise up to have compassion on me, from acting in my favour and for my interest. But in future he shall not annoy anybody in Berlin.

"SOPHIE DOROTHEA."

In the autumn of the same year Sophie Dorothea learned that the Queen of Prussia was coming to Hanover on a visit to her father, George I., who had come over from England to spend a few months in his beloved Electorate. As the Queen would be so near her mother's prison Sophie Dorothea prayed earnestly to see her, and the daughter half promised to come. The moral effect of a visit from the Queen of Prussia to the neglected captive at Ahlden would have been very great, and could not have failed to benefit the prisoner, at least in increased consideration and respect. It would have been a sign to all the world that her daughter was on her side. No wonder the friendless captive desired it so ardently! When she heard that her daughter had arrived at Hanover she dressed herself with more than usual care, and looked out from her window day after day across the moorland. It was a different

face from that which had looked out from the casement thirty years before in the bloom of its youthful beauty. The Princess's hair was white now, and her face lined and drawn, but she still retained traces of great loveliness.

The days went by and the Queen came not, though day by day, and hour by hour, the captive strained her eyes in the direction of Hanover and her ears for sound of the chariot wheels. When the Queen of Prussia arrived at Hanover she was afraid to move in the matter. Her husband forbade her to go to Ahlden, for fear of angering her father, whom he wished to conciliate. So she abandoned the idea, and lost her one chance of seeing her mother.

By-and-by the news came to Ahlden that the Queen of Prussia had gone back to Berlin, and for the first time for long years Sophie Dorothea gave up hope. She had counted so much on this visit, built so many castles in the air upon it, made so many plans, gone over again and again what she would say and how she would greet her daughter, that the disappointment nearly broke her heart. Her daughter had failed her, as all others had failed. It was a convincing proof that, despite all protestations, the Queen of Prussia could not, or would not, make any decisive step on her mother's behalf.

The result of this disappointment was to make Sophie Dorothea cling more closely to the Count de Bar and centre her hopes around him. She caught at him as the drowning man catches at the proverbial straw. One by one her friends had died or proved

false, the last of the list of traitors being Ludemann, the bailiff of Ahlden; but she trusted all the more implicitly the Count de Bar, who was the greatest traitor of all. She wrote to him when she was still smarting under the sense of her daughter's neglect, the following letter, in which she again assures him of her confidence:

"AHLDEN, *September* 27, 1725.

"Words cannot express all I think," she writes, "all I have always thought without the least diminution, all I shall never cease to think. In the name of God, be always the same to me, as I shall be to you till my latest breath."

She speaks of the "dragons and spies" by whom she was surrounded, and, after adverting on the marriage scheme and the treachery of Ludemann, she goes on to say:

"I am of opinion that the whole of this black business [the treachery of Ludemann] has been got up by the clique here for reasons and ends easy to be perceived. This affair has caused me very deep and poignant grief, and shows me the deplorable and dangerous condition wherein I am placed—a condition which is getting worse and worse. I am surrounded by people without pity or justice, and their number is daily increasing. I am incessantly exposed to their calumnies, false suspicions, and ill-turns. They now have it more than ever in their power to invent words and actions which they attribute to me, and so strive to blacken my reputation. Ludemann, who was the only channel

through which I could learn anything and make known the truth, is at present absolutely devoted to them.

"If I feared poison many years ago, my present circumstances are such as to strengthen that fear; and as life is not now indifferent to me, this suspicion, added to all the rest, would surely disturb my tranquillity did not the Almighty grace of God preserve peace in my heart in spite of all storms, and give me increased strength and courage in proportion to the greater need I have of them: I have never had more need of them than now. You may rest assured that, with the aid of that divine grace, nothing on earth will bring about a change in my sentiments or conduct, nor lead me to any action in the slightest degree mean and unworthy. I will resolutely and steadfastly adhere to what I have held fast for so many years, without the smallest change. My honour and what I owe to myself demand it, and every conceivable reason strengthens me in this policy.

"My health is good, and better than might be expected in my agitated state of mind. The God of mercy supports me in a marvellous way; and I take care of myself, since my friends have the goodness to be interested in my welfare. The strong expressions I made use of in my preceding letter on this subject were intended to convey an idea of the great annoyance I am suffering on all sides. Indeed, they excite in me an intense disgust of this place and an ardent desire to leave it."

Sophie Dorothea was utterly alone in the world: her mother was dead, her daughter had failed her, and she was at the mercy of hirelings, who, under pretext of sympathy, were continually robbing and betraying her. Her one idea now was to effect an escape from Ahlden. A year later we find her writing again to the Count de Bar; in her letter she speaks of the "unheard-of injustice and fury of my enemies," and entreats him to come to her. She goes on to say:

"AHLDEN, *August* 19, 1726, 3 *o'clock in the morning*.

"I must confess that the news that has come from beyond the sea occupies my mind. God grant there may be no obstacle to delay what I have at heart more than I can express! You are not ignorant, sir, what that is: all my sentiments are known to you. I picture myself becoming a monster losing its sight, but I have hardly thought about it. I doubt whether Heaven, in exchange, will be pleased to open certain eyes. I am entirely ignorant of what is passing in the world except what I learn from the ordinary political news. I am guarded, and more pains than ever are taken to prevent my learning anything."

This was the last cry for help. The Count de Bar hastened not to her succour, but, instead, the Pale Horseman came galloping over the heath. Deliverance was at hand—the last deliverance, whose name is Death. Yet before that came Sophie Dorothea had to drink the last drop in her cup of bitterness. Convincing proof was brought her that the man in

whom she trusted was added to the long list of traitors. He had never meant to come, he had never wished her to escape; she had henceforth no one to whom she could turn.

This was the last betrayal the unhappy woman had to suffer. Under it strength and fortitude gave way. She wrote one more letter (to be delivered after her death), and gave it under seal to a trusty messenger. Then she broke down utterly, and took to her bed with an attack of something like brain fever. The Governor of the castle sent hurriedly to Hanover, and the news of her serious illness was conveyed to the King in England. Everything that medical skill could do was done without avail: court physicians, apothecaries, and surgeons hurried from Hanover to the lonely castle; but they could do nothing. Confidential Ministers of State came, too; but they were also helpless—they could only listen, shuddering, to the awful ravings of the dying woman. The seal she had set on her lips for years was broken at last, and day after day as she fought for life she denounced the tyrant who had been her gaoler and her judge, and cried to Heaven for vengeance upon him. She lost all rallying power, and grew weaker and weaker, until at last, one dull November day, when the chill mists hung heavy over the marshes around Ahlden, Sophie Dorothea breathed her last in the little room where she had been prisoner for so many weary years!

Sophie Dorothea died on November 13, 1726, in the sixty-first year of her age and the thirty-third of her captivity.

CHAPTER XXIX

RETRIBUTION

(1727)

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

SHAKSPEARE, *King Richard III.*

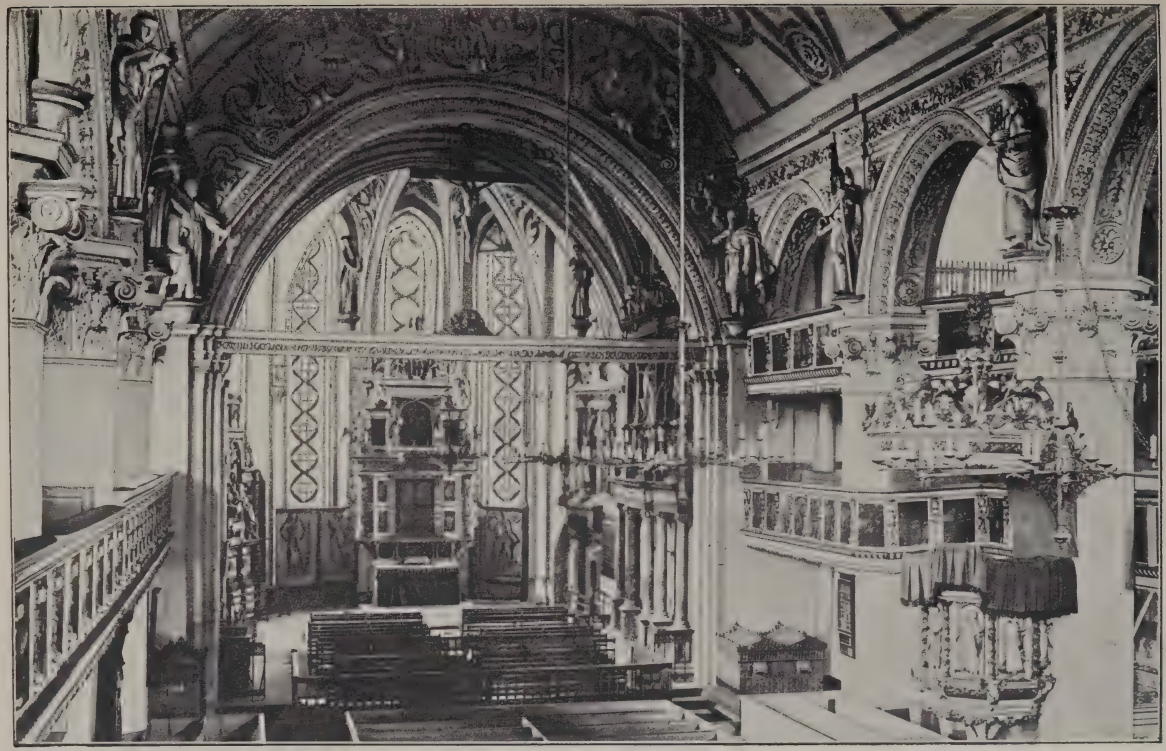
OVER in England the King heard the news of his wife's death with ill-concealed concern, born not of remorse, but fear. In his superstitious soul he remembered the prophecy and trembled. His forebodings of evil were not lessened when Prince Waldeck arrived from Hanover with secret despatches, which gave a detailed account of the awful death-bed at Ahlden and the dying woman's appeal to the retribution of Heaven. Nor did the King derive much comfort from his withered mistresses, for the Duchess of Kendal, to whom he confided all, had a firm faith in omens, visions, and soothsayers, and was even more troubled than he. By way of averting the curse she became more devout than ever, and attended church as many as four times a day, notwithstanding the fact that the Lutheran minister at the German Chapel Royal refused her the com-

munion on the ground that she was living in unrepentant adultery. King George sought to shake off his depression by every means in his power, and the very evening that he learned the tidings his wife was no more he sought distraction by going to see a performance of the Italian comedians at the Haymarket, accompanied by the Duchess of Kendal and Lady Darlington. The next day he commanded a special performance at the King's Theatre, which was followed by others, though up to now the play was a pastime he had very rarely indulged in. But all his efforts were ineffectual, for the shade of his victim haunted him, and her dying cry for vengeance rang in his ears. Sophie Dorothea was more powerful in death than in life.

Outwardly the Court of St. James' ignored the event, and, beyond a line in the *London Gazette* to the effect that the "Duchess of Ahlden" had died at Ahlden on a date specified, the death of the wife of the King of England and the mother of the king to be received no official notice whatever. But the Court of Hanover on receipt of the news from Ahlden had very properly assumed mourning, as on the occasion of the decease of the Duchess of Celle. When King George heard this he waxed exceeding wroth, and sent peremptory orders to the Hanoverian officials to return to their ordinary wear. His anger was increased when he learned that the Court of Berlin had decreed the deepest mourning, as for a Queen of England who was also mother of the Queen of Prussia. It was a natural mark of

respect for the daughter to pay, and it showed to all the world that she believed her mother to be an innocent woman. George I. resented the Court mourning at Berlin as a personal affront, and protested; but his protest was in vain. Thus did his mean malice pursue his victim even in death.

Meanwhile the body of Sophie Dorothea lay in a plain leaden coffin in the vaults of the Castle of Ahlden, awaiting the King's orders. None dared pay the remains any honour, nor even give them a decent and Christian burial, for fear of offending the tyrant in England. With the new year (1727) Prince Waldeck came back from London with the Royal command that the "Duchess of Ahlden" should be buried with as little ceremony as possible in a grave dug in the garden of the castle. But the season was rainy and the Aller overflowed its banks, and though the grave-diggers dug again and again in the swampy ground the waters always rushed into the grave and rendered their labours vain. It was impossible to communicate quickly with the King across the sea, so the coffin was ignominiously carried back again to the cellar, covered over with a heap of sand, and left until further orders. It would have been left there until now, for all the King cared, had he not been a prey to superstitious fears. He could not sleep, he could not rest, and life was becoming a burden to him. This may have been due to advancing years and an impaired digestion, for he was a coarse and heavy eater; but the Duchess of Kendal declared that she was warned in a dream that it was all the work of the



THE CHURCH AT CELLE, WHERE SOPHIE DOROTHEA IS BURIED. [*To face p.* 654.

unquiet spirit of Sophie Dorothea, and her ghost would never rest, nor let the King rest, until her body was laid by the side of her ancestors at Celle.

One May morning, therefore, a King's messenger arrived at Ahlden from England with orders, under the Royal sign manual, that the remains of the "Duchess of Ahlden" should be interred in the ducal burial-vaults in the old church of Celle as quietly and expeditiously as possible. That same night the body was taken from the cellar, hoisted on to a vehicle, and conveyed across the moorland to Celle, where it arrived while the little town was still sleeping. Three or four workmen from the castle were waiting in the church and everything was in readiness. Without any ceremony or religious service the coffin was hurried down to the vaults under the chancel, where it lies until this day.

The church above is full of effigies of Sophie Dorothea's ancestors, whose deeds and renown are blazoned forth in brass and marble and painted glass; but there is neither memorial nor inscription to mark the last resting-place of the heiress of Celle, who, by virtue of her sufferings, was the most famous of them all. In the dark vault below, her remains could not be identified at all were it not for a small shield on the top right-hand corner of the coffin, containing her name and the dates of birth and death. Hard by the church in the "French Garden" of the castle there stands a statue of the Danish Queen, Caroline Matilda, whose sad lot closely resembled that of Sophie Dorothea, and whose body was deposited in the same vault half a century later.

But of the heiress of Celle, direct ancestress of two of the mightiest sovereigns in the modern world, there exists no monument whatever. Now that the flight of years has obliterated the bitterness which clung around her name it is surely time that some memorial were raised to her memory. And where more fitting than in the place of her birth, under the grey walls of the old castle she loved so well? She was the last princess of Celle, and in the hearts of the people the tradition of her beauty and her woes still lingers.

The vision which appeared to the Duchess of Kendal must have been a lying spirit, for though Sophie Dorothea slept with her forefathers, no relief came to her oppressor. King George was overwrought, nervous, and dispirited. His government was honeycombed with intrigues, his quarrel with his son was intensified in bitterness; and not all his avaricious mistresses with their ruddled cheeks could give him comfort. He was consumed with a desire to return to Hanover. Peradventure, like certain criminals, he felt impelled to revisit the scene of his crime.

On June 3, 1727, a month after the tardy burial of his victim, the King set out from England for Hanover. Travelling night and day, he reached Dalden on the far frontier of Holland at midnight on June 9th. Here he stopped to change horses and he devoured a huge supper. Instead of tarrying for the night, as his suite expected and his travelling physician advised, for he had eaten heavily and was worn out with the long journey, the King was

seized with an overpowering restlessness to reach Hanover, and started off again at three o'clock in the morning.

As the Royal coach rumbled out of the courtyard a man stepped forth from the shadow and threw a document through the window on to the King's knees. Neither His Majesty nor his escort thought anything of the incident, supposing the paper to be one of those many petitions with which George was wont to be pestered on his return to the Electorate. By the grey light of the dawn the King broke the seal and read, and as he read his hands shook and his face grew ashen. It was a letter from his dead wife, written when she felt the hand of death upon her. The trusty messenger, to whom she had given the packet, had waited and waited until the King should come from England that he might surely deliver it into his hands. It was an awful letter for a woman to write, doubly awful for the man to receive. It was penned evidently when Sophie Dorothea's brain was on fire with her wrongs —when her reason was trembling in the balance; in it she reiterated her sufferings and his cruelty, cursed him with her dying breath, and summoned him to meet her within a year and a day before the judgment throne of God, there to answer for the wrong he had done her. To the trembling tyrant it came like a voice from the dead. He recalled again the prophecy that he would not long outlive his wife, and now came the confirmation of his fears. He heard his victim, like an accusing angel, calling

him to his doom—a year and a day—a year and a day,—and that was last November. The letter fell from his nerveless hands, there was a rush of blood to his eyes, a beating in his brain, and he fell forward in a fit.

In great alarm the equerry called a halt, and the long procession of coaches and escort, pulled up by the wayside. But the King recovered almost immediately, and, insisting that it was nothing, angrily commanded them to proceed. Linden, the next stopping-place, was reached in a few hours, and here dinner awaited the Royal traveller. But the King could not eat. His indisposition was evidently worse than he would admit. The surgeons bled him and dosed him and advised a rest; but their patient would hear no reason, his one desire was to push forward to his beloved Hanover.

Quitting Linden at sunset, the Royal *cortége* thundered forward with all speed. An hour later the King became much worse, but he hastened on as though pursued by a legion of furies. His escort would fain have halted; but still the King urged them on, leaning forward from the window, and shouting, "To Osnabrück! to Osnabrück!" as the horses galloped through the gathering dusk. Osnabrück was reached at ten o'clock; but by that time the King had again collapsed, falling forward into the arms of his gentleman-in-waiting. They bore him into the Episcopal Palace, now occupied by his youngest brother Ernest Augustus, bled him again, chafed his clenched hands, applied restoratives; but all in vain.

George never recovered consciousness, and died at midnight in the very room where he was born sixty-seven years before. He had obeyed the dread summons, and had gone to meet his wife before the judgment throne of God.

Thus died George I., the first of our Hanoverian kings, unloved and unmourned—nay, not quite unmourned, for even this man had one who loved him. His aged mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, had not been able to pack up in time to travel with her liege, but was following him with all speed. When the news of his death was brought her on the road she gave way to the loudest demonstrations of grief, beating her breast, tearing her hair, and filling the air with lamentations. She had lived with him nigh on forty years, and though he had not been true to her—for it was not his nature to be true to any one—in his way he had been fond of her; she had become as indispensable to him as he had to her.

The Duchess journeyed to Brunswick and remained there for some months, abandoning herself to the violence of her sorrow. Then prudence got the better of her sense of bereavement, and she returned to England to look after her moneys. She took up her abode at Isleworth, and lived there in pious retirement and affluence. She was devoted to the King's memory. He had promised, she said, to come back to her after death, and one day when a raven fluttered in at her window she took it into her silly old head that George had come to her in this guise. She took charge of the bird, treated it with all honour,

petted and caressed it to the day of her death, and provided for it in her will. Let us hope it gave her some comfort. Poor old Ermengarda Melusina! She had her faults, but she was always on the side of mercy, even in the case of the sad captive of Ahlden, whom she had supplanted, to be in turn supplanted by others. Yet, despite them all, she loved her George, and his affection for her, grotesque though it was, formed the only redeeming grace in his character.

The new King, George II., did nothing so far as we know to clear his mother's memory, though Horace Walpole writes: "The second George loved his mother as much as he hated his father, and purposed, it was said, if she had survived, to have brought her over and declared her Queen-Dowager. Lady Suffolk told me her surprise, on going to the new Queen the morning after George I.'s death, at seeing hung up in the Queen's dressing-room the whole length of a lady in royal robes, and in the bedchamber a half-length of the same person, which Lady Suffolk had never seen before." [1] They were pictures of his mother, which the Prince had till then kept concealed. This hardly tallies with Lord Hervey's testimony of George's II. reticence concerning his mother, "whom," he writes, "on no occasion I ever heard him mention, not even inadvertently or indirectly, any more than if such a person had ever had a being." [2] The Jacobites used to call George II. "the little Königsmarck" (an unfounded libel if ever there was one!) and this may have accounted for his silence.

[1] Walpole's *Reminiscences.* [2] Lord Hervey's *Memoirs.*

Another poetaster twitted "dapper George" with being governed by his Queen, and advised him

> .... if you would have us fall down and adore you,
> Lock up your fat spouse, as your dad did before you,

which shows that Sophie Dorothea's imprisonment at Ahlden was fairly familiar to the English public.

That the true story of his mother's life became known to George II. is certain, for on his first visit to Hanover after ascending the throne of England he ordered the secret records of the divorce proceedings to be brought to him, and, after he had read them through carefully, he burned them with his own hands. The same fate probably befell the incriminating letters. Extraordinary care was taken at Hanover to suppress or destroy any and every compromising document or paper which contained mention of Sophie Dorothea or Königsmarck. Despite these precautions, the most damning evidence of all came to light. Some workmen employed in renovating the wing formerly occupied by Sophie Dorothea in the Palace of Hanover, came across the skeleton of a man, almost unrecognisable from quicklime, but, from a ring and fragments of clothing, was identified as that of the missing Count Königsmarck. Orders were given that the place should be bricked up again, and the remains were thrust out of sight once for all—probably pulverised and cast into the river Leine.

These things go to prove that the son lacked the courage to do justice to his mother's memory,

or he believed her guilty. In death, as in life, Sophie Dorothea continued to be the Iron Mask of the House of Hanover.

But we can afford to be more merciful in our judgment. Whatever were the faults of her youth, she atoned for them fourfold. Her dauntless spirit, her fortitude, her dignified resignation through long years of captivity, invest her memory with a halo of suffering. Her love and her sorrows plead for her—her sorrows most of all, for it may be doubted if all history, all romance, can offer a parallel to the long-drawn agony of the life of this uncrowned queen.

APPENDIX

LIST OF AUTHORITIES QUOTED, AND BOOKS TO WHICH REFERENCE HAS BEEN MADE.

UNPUBLISHED MSS.

The Correspondence of Princess Sophie Dorothea and Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck, 1691—1693 (in French). Preserved in the University Library of Lund, Sweden.

The Despatches and Correspondence of Sir William Dutton Colt, Envoy-Extraordinary to the Princes of Brunswick and Lüneburg, 1689—1693. In the State Paper Office, London.

The Despatches and Correspondence of Mr. Cresset (who succeeded Sir W. D. Colt at Hanover) and his secretaries, 1693—1702. In the State Paper Office, London.

The Despatches of Mr. Poley (who succeeded Mr. Cresset at Hanover), 1705. In the State Paper Office, London.

Sundry Letters of Mr. Stepney, sometime British Envoy to the Court of Dresden, 1694—1695. In the State Paper Office, London.

Sundry Letters and Papers (in French and German), specified elsewhere. Preserved in the Royal Archives and Library, Hanover, and at Brunswick and Dresden.

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Die Prinzessin von Ahlden. By *Dr. Adolph Köcher.* Two articles in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1882, vol. xlviii.

Römischen Octavia, 1707, vol. vi. By Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel.

The Magazine of the Historical Association of Lower Saxony, 1879.

Sophie Dorothea, Prinzessin von Ahlden und Kurfürstin Sophie von Hannover. By A. F. H. Schaumann. Hanover, 1879.

Briefe der Herzogin von Orleans, Elizabeth Charlotte, an die Kurfürstin Sophie von Hanover.

Briefe der Prinzessin Elisabeth Charlotte von Orleans, 1676—1722.

Memoiren der Herzogin Sophie, nachmals Kurfürstin von Hannover. Dr. Adolph Köcher. Leipzig, 1879.

Memoires du règne de George I. "Anon." The Hague, 1729.

Letters with varied contents. Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1772.

Geschichte der Herzogin von Ahlden. Copenhagen, 1786.

Short Narrative of my Fate and Imprisonment. Hamburg, 1840. Edited by "W. L. Mollor." (Major Müller.)

> This purports to be an autobiography written by the Princess Sophie Dorothea, but it is spurious. Yet the deeds and letters quoted show that the author had access to some genuine documents, and point to the writer being Major Müller, librarian to the late Duke of Cambridge.

Memoirs of Sophie Dorothea. Two vols. London, 1845. Out of print. Translated into the German also. Written anonymously. [By Major Müller, sometime librarian to the late Duke of Cambridge.]

This covers much the same ground as the *Short Narrative*, and also contains some authentic documents and papers. Like the *Short Narrative* it is evidently based on Duke Antony Ulrich's *Octavia*. But the "Diary of Conversations," in vol. ii., purporting to be written by Sophie Dorothea, is undoubtedly spurious.

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An Article on *Fresh Contributions to the History of the Hanoverian Princess Sophie Dorothea.* By Edward Bodemann.

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The Four Georges. By W. M. Thackeray.

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The Electress Sophia. Article in *The Quarterly Review*, vol. 161.

Carlyle's *Frederick II.*

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